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THE
OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE FIRST.

Hunday and Slater, Printers, Oxford.

THE
CATHOLIC



A View of great Tom - the CHRIST CHURCH BELL

Pubd Feb 14th 1816 by H.W. TORRES, No 10 Piccadilly

And P. 1816

THE
OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE FIRST.

**DR. OF
CALIFORNIA**

“————— Nothing extenuate,
“ Nor set down aught in malice.”

THIRD EDITION.

OXFORD:
FOR MUNDAY AND SLATTER, HERALD-OFFICE.
1818.

TO THE
ADDRESS

THE
OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE FIRST.

REV. OF
CALIFORNIA

P. "SAY, what is easiest?" Thales, ere he twice
Had heard the question, said, "To give advice."
Thales was right; yet equal reasons make
This same advice the hardest thing to take.
You wish me silent, and exhort to stay
Where zeal for wisdom holds a sacred sway;
But who was ever silent, doom'd to feel
How dull that wisdom, and how cold that zeal?
Who discontented, yet not prone to vent
The frothy torrent of his discontent?
Fool that I am! who know not how to paint
The wit of Dons, the pleasures of restraint;
But sick of scenes, unlike what fancy drew,
Must bid, my friend, to them, and thee, adieu!

MG9139

C. Ah, luckless youth! what! thirsting still to range;
And only constant in the love of change!
Still at each tide of varying life unblest;
Unfit for action, yet fatigued with rest!
Haste—seek perfection, till thy race is run,
Then ~~high to find~~ at last—thyself undone:
~~When thou shalt see~~, or tried experience shew,
A place without its follies—freely go—
Some unknown land beyond the watery waste,
Where man is always wise, and woman chaste—
Yet might cool reason, in her sober strain,
Still give one counsel more—till then, remain!
Here, safe reclin'd in academic shade,
See, what the world its votaries hath made!
The ruin'd statesman, tir'd of broils and leagues;
The people's murmurs, and the court's intrigues—
The churchman, forc'd to feel, in sad surprise,
That solid merit hath no wings to rise—
The staff-propp'd veteran, seam'd with many a scar,
The sole memorials from years of war—
The bold adventurer, tost on life's rude sea,
Who found no voyage sure, no haven free—

The man, no pleasures lure, no fears appal,
Who climbs fame's fatal precipice—to fall—
The more than child, who flutters youth away,
To court the fair, and glitter with the gay:
Late taught, that folly is man's only care;
~~And woman never thinks—but to ensnare~~
Here might they all, in scenes unknown to strife,
Seek a calm sunset to the storms of life.
Here, ere ambition's troubled dream was o'er,
And mitres, war, and pleasure, pleas'd no more,
Wolsey, ere sunk "in ruin as in guilt,"
Had better sought the walls himself had built:
Here smil'd to think, in life's last parting hour,
How poor is wealth, how impotent is pow'r!

Yes: if there be one sacred scene of ease,
Where reason yet may dawn, and virtue please;
Where ancient Science bursts again to view,
With mightier truths, which Athens never knew:
One spot to order, peace, religion, dear;
Rise, honest pride, nor blush to claim it here!

Why then these fond complaints? *P.* Because, my friend,
Substantial ills these fancied goods attend.
I too,—when first these glistening eyes survey'd
Majestic Oxford's hundred towers display'd;
And silver Isis rolling at her feet
Adorn the Sage's, and the Poet's seat:
Saw Radcliffe's dome in classic beauty rear'd,
And learning's stores in Bodley's pile rever'd:
First view'd with humble awe, the steps that stray'd
Slow in the gloom of academic shade;
Or fram'd in thought, with fancy's magic wand,
Wise Bacon's arch; thy bow'r, fair Rosamond!
Heav'n! how I hop'd, in studious calm to find
Peace for the soul, and wisdom for the mind!
How swift, how bright, the kindling visions came!
How burnt the thirst of science, and of fame!
What bade these feelings ebb, ye pedants, say?
What broke the dream, and rent the veil away?
What dash'd these hopes to nothing?—'Twas to see
Such folly cloth'd in such solemnity;
To see, amid the foldings of the gown,
Lurk the same failings which disgrace the town;

Spleen, envy, meanness, pride but ill repress,
And all the meaner passions of the breast,
Mix'd with the calm, which leaves no trace behind,
The sullen, sad, monotony of mind.
Oh ! though remote from Isis' toil and strife,
And all the deeper interests of life ;
Ye souls to feeling, and to nature true,
Who love retirement, 'tis no place for you !
No place for thee, whom young romance has taught
To nurse ideal luxury of thought ;
Who feel'st a joy, to vulgar minds unknown,
To gaze upon the sea, and muse alone ;
View the grey ruin, while the moon half shrouds
Her modest beauty in the veil of clouds ;
Or pensive hear the baying watch-dog's howl,
And solemn screeching of the boding owl :
Or snatch those pleasures from the midnight breeze,
Which least explain'd, are mightiest still to please !
Oh ! what the lovely stream, the silent shade,
The awful tow'rs, which seem for science made ;
The solemn chapels, which to prayer invite,
Whose storied windows shed a holy light ;

If there Philosophy base chains has felt,
Nor simple pure Religion ever dwelt ;
No Physics there, by just gradations, lead
Through Nature's stream to Nature's fountain-head ;
But e'en Divinity becomes a trade,
And they, who look the gravest, never pray'd ;
Or pray in such a high imperious tone,
It seems they merely would demand their own ;
If sad St. Mary hears polemics preach,
And Bampton Lectures points of doctrine teach ;
If heav'n is mock'd—and bells to Chapel toll,
To see no name be missing on the roll ?—

C. Yet here Religion's firmest aids preside,
To stem the torrent of corruption's tide.
Here, if on earth, the studious mind pursues,
Safe, undisturb'd, her scientific views :
While thousand volumes court her keen research,
Lights of the Law, and Fathers of the Church ;
No worldly cares their deep distraction blend
To force attention from its single end :

No roseate charms intrude their fatal sway ;
No smiling wantons flatter and betray.
Here Church and State—*P.* Oh touch not on those rocks!
I grant you learned, grave, and orthodox ;
I swear, that always truth in schoolmen shines,
And always pure religion in divines ;
I swear there's sense in Logic—only stop
Those dreadful words, and let the subject drop !
When once they come, the kindling gownsmen stalk,
“ And they will talk—ye Gods ! how they will talk ! ”
For hear some loud Professor at the feast,
Or awful Orthodoxy's great high priest ;
Some man of fit rotundity, to claim
So high an office, and so great a name ;
Some British Omar, with the Caliph's creed,
“ All, but the Stagyrte, the flames should feed :
“ Those things are needless, which in him are found,
“ Those, which are not, are hurtful and unsound : ”
Still, with consistency of blame and praise,
Which might a mob or minister amaze ;
Ere other themes are circling, o'er the bottle
Cry, “ Church and State, the Prince and Aristotle.”

Thus, I remember, ere these scenes I saw,
But hope had drawn them, such as hope will draw :
A shrewd old man, on Isis' margin bred,
Smil'd at my warmth, and shook his wig, and said :
" Youth will be sanguine, but before you go,
" Learn these plain rules, and treasure, when you know.
" Wisdom is innate in the gown and band ;
" Their wearers are the wisest of the land :
" Science, except in Oxford, is a dream :
" In all things Heads of Houses are supreme :
" Proctors are perfect, whosoe'er they be :
" Logic is Reason in Epitome :
" Examiners, like kings, can do no wrong :
" All modern learning is not worth a song :
" Passive obedience is the rule of right :
" To argue, or oppose, is treason quite :
" Mere common-sense would make the system fall :
" Things are worth nothing ; words are all in all."

C. Schoolmen have said, for schoolmen may be wise—
That " Fallacy in universals lies."

A man may rail in generals for a week :—
Ask for particulars, he cannot speak.
'Tis thus at inns in hungry haste you ring :
“ Waiter, what is there ? ” “ Sir, there’s every thing.”
“ Every thing’s nothing : bring the bill of fare,
“ This all ! by Heav’n ’twould make a parson swear ! ”
Unhappy man ! alas, too soon thou learnest,
That ev’ry thing is nothing in good earnest !—
Come, shew our follies, one by one, to light,
Shew, if you can.—*P.* My friend, a Freshman might.
Here endless joys his raptur’d thoughts foresee,
Panting for praise, and charm’d with novelty :
With boundless hope he inly vows to claim
The brightest meeds of literary fame ;
The yearly prizes courts with soaring muse,
And his own form in Sheldon’s rostrum views ;
Reckless of Pleasure’s voice, or Beauty’s eye,
He bids all passions, but ambition, die :
No labours tire, no difficulties vex ;
Scarce can the Stagyrite himself perplex ;
Yet sick, at last, of tracing o’er and o’er
Some old historian, oft perus’d before,

His flighty fancy seeks a wider range,
Too fond of taste, and elegance, and change :
He doubts, by toil and disappointment crost,
And, like a woman, while he doubts, is lost !
Then rage the passions, from restraint more strong ;
And sweep, like streams which burst their banks, along :
Or care and chill indifference round him creep ;
Or sloth and bad example lull to sleep ;
Yet praise he woos—but chang'd the fair pretence
To midnight broil, and prodigal expense ;
Or buoy'd by hope, which still the wisest fools,
He seeks the highest honours in the Schools :
Where at some trifling point's obscure details,
Memory and thought forsake him—and he fails.
Thwarted and sad he bears his sorrows home,
And feels the rankling wound for life to come.
He, on the world who plays the venturous game
For all, ambition, valour, love may claim ;
Though foil'd, or stopp'd ; cast backward, or astray,
Renews the contest, till he gains the day ;
While struggles o'er, and disappointments past,
Enhance the triumph of success at last :

But here should some unfeeling pedant's frown
Nip the bright budding of his glory down ;
Not once again the drooping youth may try
His desp'rate fate, nor throw again the die.*
Or should the paper shew his blazon'd name
In the first lists of academic fame ;
Still, still the care remains to form his mind—
No College honours fit him for mankind.

Yet this, I deem, or is, or ought to be,
The aim of either University :
All education to this point must tend ;
Or what its use, its object, and its end ?
Strange ! that while all around new lights discern,
The seat of learning never deigns to learn !

C. Yet here the rays of modern Science spread ;
Professors are appointed, lectures read.†

* It has been observed that " the great art in life is to play high, " and stake little : " here a young man of acute sensibility stakes his comfort, and plays for a name.

† When a stranger enters Oxford, and sees printed in large letters, that the Clinical Professor, the Savilian Professor, and sundry other

If none attend, or hear ; not our's the blame,
Their's is the folly—and be their's the shame.

P. How deep the Sophistries Logicians draw !
Poor common-sense can hardly find a flaw.
Proceed, most learned friend, and gravely say,
That if men will be Solomons—they may.
Yet, if the dreams of ancients still must be
The “ sum and substance ” of the first degree ;
While modern science meets a doubtful doom ;
Like some plain girl in an assembly-room,
Who waits, in painful diffidence, to know
If fops will deign to ask her hand, or no.
Think, which the most attention will receive ;
What fools must learn ; or what the wise may leave.

Professors, propose to give a course of Lectures on such and such subjects, he will, perhaps, wonder for a moment at the accusation, that no attention is paid to the modern sciences ; but his surprise will vanish, when, on reading a little farther, he finds the condition, which the Lecturer makes for the repose of his lungs ; “ if he can get a class,” or, “ if there is a sufficient number of names to form a class.” An unlucky proviso of this kind, is a simple proof, that the younger members of the University will not much trouble themselves about any branches of knowledge, which bring neither credit in the prosecution, nor censure in the omission.

At lore and logic, who shall dare to scoff,
Which make that wond'rous animal, a Soph?
Or who will choose that knowledge for his aim,
Which gains no credit, and confers no fame?
Young men, alas! in this degenerate nation;
Perform no works of supererogation.
For see, what nearer, weightier cares engage
The youth of England in our happy age!
See, to their view what varied pleasure springs;
Cards, tennis, billiards, and ten thousand things.
'Tis their's the coat with neater grace to wear,
Or tie the neckcloth with the Regent's air;
The rapid race of wild expense to run;
To drive the tandem, or the chaise and one;
To float along the Isis—or to fly
In haste to Abingdon—who knows not why?
To gaze in shops, and saunter hours away
In raising bills, they never think to pay;
Then deep carouse, and raise their glee the more,
While angry duns assault th' unheeding door;
And feed the best old man that ever trod,
The merry poacher who defies his God.
—Yet some pale youth fatigues th' unwilling brain
With Euclid's theorems, or Pindar's strain:

Careless of sleep, and midnight's noxious damp,
 Cons his hard studies by the waning lamp;
 Endures, in patient toil, without a sigh,
 The aching forehead, and the closing eye;
 And fondly trusts some college gift to gain
 By strength of talent, or by dint of pain.
 Then hope, perhaps, or fiend of busy spite,
 Or gnome, or devil, spurs him on to write.*
 Scarce know themselves, upon his paper spread,
 The borrow'd beauties of the mighty dead:
 But out of character, and time, and place,
 Lose all their force, propriety, and grace:
 Sad, as when sever'd from the parent wood
 The branch of myrtle wept with tears of blood:
 Or attic marbles mourn their fatal doom,
 Torn from their base, and crowded in a room!

* In Oxford or in Cambridge, it is certainly a different thing to write a prize poem, or to write a good poem; though there may be no necessity that the prize poems should not be good. The chief requisites in good poetry are genius, judgment, and an observance of nature: in the Universities flights of imagination are altogether discouraged: a composition is judged not by the greatest beauties, but the fewest faults: and the most needful qualities for writing, are education at a public school; a mechanical tact in imitating the ancient authors: and a servile compliance with the reigning taste of the place.

Or happier in his native tongue, he sues,
 With self-beguiling joy, the British Muse,
 'Cursing Sir Roger, whose harsh will confines*
 The gownsman's flowing vein to fifty lines.
 This year he thinks the Theatre shall see
 Its glories beaming to their full degree;
 As when gay Emperors chas'd the college gloom,
 And turn'd the Radcliffe to a dining-room;
 When ravish'd Oxford made, with vast applause,
 Kings, warriors, statesmen, Doctors of her Laws.
 This year shall mightier music fill the dome;
 From all around shall youth and beauty come;
 Italian lips shall tune the melting strain,
 Till pleasure's ecstasy is almost pain;
 Thy belles, sweet Isis, 'mid the rest be there;
 In dress as splendid, and in form as fair.
 She, too, perhaps,—the maid whose loveliness
 Now fires his mind—shall smile on his success;

* I have been lately told, that Sir Roger Newdigate merely left by his will twenty guineas for a composition in English verse, without any conditions or limitations; but that these were made by the worthy Heads of Houses, who wished to abridge the recitations in the Theatre. This, however, is, I trust, a mistake: at any rate, the feeling now in the University is decidedly against the present plan: and I believe there are not subjects for above ten or twelve more poems.

Her speaking eye upon his form shall gaze—
 Her fair white hand shall give a louder praise—
 Her heart shall beat to hear his rising name—
 And bid her love accompany his fame.

Yet, be thy love and genius what they will,
 Unhappy poet! check that rapid quill:
 Yet, for thy credit, hear a friend advise:
 Consult not, trust not fancy, but thine eyes;
 Let all thy lines be like an artist's lecture,
 And seek not poetry, but architecture:
 Go where they shew the model, if you see 'em,
 And take the profile of the Coliseum!*

C. Peace! peace! this levelling satire, thus applied,
 Hurts us no more, than all the world beside.
 Why rail on Oxford—nor direct your spleen
 To Leyden, Leipsic, Cam, or Aberdeen?†

* The last subject for Sir Roger Newdigate's prize.

† Let it be always kept in mind, that there is no comparison made or meant to be made, between this and any other system of education. Oxford, with all its faults, seems to me preferable to the mathematical mania of Cambridge, or the irregularity, insubordination, and superficial acquirements of foreign Universities: and its studies will probably infuse more taste and judgment than the one; and more solidity of character and conduct, than the other.

P. Because my friend, however great may be
Their faults and follies—what are they to me?
Let others dread the storm, or bless the gale,
We care but for the ship in which we sail;
Britons will damn the climate and the rain,
But curse no serpents, when they feel no pain:
Our follies touch me—let us these pursue—
In sooth, my friend, we have enough to do.
—For lo! the first in dignity and might,
Thy glories, Convocation, burst to sight.
Hail, synod grave, which Heads of Houses keep,
To talk, and legislate—“perchance to sleep!”
Hail, Heads of Houses, whom your stars have made
To seem philosophers in masquerade!
I hail you all, ye Dons of high degree,
Puff’d with the conscious pride of dignity;
Solemn, and sage, and portly to a man,
The worthy semblance of the Turk’s Divan!
—By Heaven! their looks compose an awful scene:
What pomp of words! what majesty of mien!
Oh! if all these the shallow brain belies,
Folly can look, at least, most wondrous wise.
To their own Oxford first their thoughts they bear,
And guard her errors with paternal care:

But, now and then, they hold the high debate,
On England's policy, and Church and State ;
Deplore the licence of the stage and press ;
Lament a grievance ; carry an Address.
Thither, as bards might sing of Grecian fire,
Their Gods descend, and all their breasts inspire ;
Such Gods, as best such mighty men beseem,
The guardians, Isis, of thy sacred stream.
There Orthodoxy, like a Glory shines
Full on the forehead of her sound divines ;
Frets their great souls with fears of coming evil,
And sends Wesleyan Chapels to the Devil.
There oft are seen two darker forms to stride
Through all the crowd, call'd Prejudice and Pride.
But Pedantry you more might hear than see ;
Such a loud jabb'ring Deity is he.
There hoary Precedent, with wrinkles sage,
Tries every counsel by the rule of age.
This, Isis, this was he, who stopp'd thy woe,
When a sad nation bade its tears o'erflow ;
When SHE, the Star, who shone the brightest here,
Left earth,—to flourish in a fitter sphere ! *

* On the most afflicting calamity that has ever occurred to any country, Oxford was almost the only place in the kingdom, which made

But England, like a mother, droop'd the head ;
 So lov'd her, living ; so bewails her, dead !
 —What wonder, then, with gods and men like these,
 That perfect wisdom dictates their decrees ?
 Some they send forth like rays from heaven, to sight ;
 And some mysterious silence veils in night.
 Whence fools suggest, who thither ne'er have gone,
 That little has been said, and nothing done ;
 That all was chit-chat in a solemn strain ;
 And sitting down, and rising up again ;
 Far, far from us such thoughts, who must adore
 Their dictates much, their awful silence more.
 —What wonder, too, if thou should'st claim a seat
 In this bright conclave of the wise and great ;
 Too gay for pomp, too lively for a Don,
 At thee they laugh, unhappy Bickerton !*

no public demonstrations of regret or condolence—not because “that learned body wanted loyalty”—not because its individual members did not sympathize with the nation and the Royal Family—but because there was no precedent. We have already begun to feel and think by precedent—we may soon perhaps learn to eat, drink, sleep, and dress by the same rule—and then how absurd it will be to complain of modern degeneracy !

* Mr. Bickerton is an original character, which, in most places, is of itself sufficient to cast upon a man the imputation of insanity. I once in the summer heard him inveigh with great indignation against the epithet here joined with his name. “How,” he said, “can any one be unhappy, who breathes the air of heaven on a morning like

Yet thou, methinks, could'st laugh in turn, to see
How ill their mien and character agree ;
Strip but the stately step, and sapient brow,
They stand as helpless, and as mad, as thou !

C. Forbear, forbear, this dull satyric vein,
Still, still it proves the poetaster's bane :
To rail, if systems some loose faults admit,
Shows spleen indeed, but poverty of wit ;
And Logic censures him, and Reason too—
Who lays on all the follies of a few :
Of rules or men some wiser than the rest
Must ever be—a friend would choose the best.
But as we smile to see the playful child
Whirl his young limbs in native spirits wild,
Then giddy stand, and feel the heaving ground,
And wonder why so swift the trees turn round :
'Tis thus with you who blindly dare to call
All others mad—more mad yourself than all.

“ this ?” There is more philosophy in this single exclamation, than in
all the gloomy denunciations of modern poetry.

END OF THE FIRST DIALOGUE.

THE
OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE SECOND.

“ ———— Nothing extenuate,
“ Nor set down aught in malice.”

THIRD EDITION.

OXFORD:
FOR MUNDAY AND SLATTER, HERALD-OFFICE.
1818,

Munday and Slatter, Printers, Oxford.

THE
OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE SECOND.

P. Loud mirth and revelry were echoing round—
Why are they hush'd? what fear has check'd the sound?
A potent spirit is abroad; a form
Of sudden terror quells the college storm!
Why shrink ye back, ye gownsmen? why retreats
The shameless wanton to remoter streets?
Why stands the crowd, with stiff and silent air,
The bow all humble, and the head all bare?
What God, or Hero passes? what high man
Receives the homage of his vassal-clan?
See! see! they come! the despot Proctors come!—
Sure never Consul kept such state at Rome.
Swift sturdy Satellites compose their train,
Whose forms declare, "Resistance, flight, are vain."

C. And who shall blame the system of police,
Which curbs the gownsman, and preserves the peace?
And who shall grieve, that just restraint should bind,
In youth, the wanton turbulence of mind,
When life is joyous, and in warmer flood
Boils the mad torrent of impetuous blood?

P. Yet when the sober tradesman would retire
Calm with his children round the winter fire:
"The world shut out;" his daily labour done;
And home's domestic dear delights begun:
If then, without, sound academic strains;
If shatter'd fall a Dignitary's panes;
Must he be question'd, and his door unbarr'd,
Like some suspected traitor?—this is hard.—
Must his young wife from midnight slumber rise?
Nor room be sacred, where a mother lies?
Oh! say, where English learning lifts her head,
Thence, English freedom, wherefore art thou fled?
Say, why did Chatham boast the Briton's right;
His house, his castle—tho' in pow'rs despite:
Tho' scarce his cot should rise above the ground,
No beam unbroken, and no window sound;

Tho' ev'ry wind of heav'n should enter there,
The King dares not—and shall the Proctor dare?—

Yes!—and for him yon castle near the steep—
Seek ye the moat, the drawbridge, and the keep!
Deem ye to hear its battlements along
The warder's measur'd tread, the trooper's broken song?
Alas! no herald there the lists proclaims
To courtly knights, and honourable dames:
No trophied banners grace the massy wall;
Nor harpers cheer, nor beauty decks the hall.
Ah me, a castle doom'd to uses vile!
To awe the poachers round for many a mile!
Where, solac'd with his pipe, the ruffian lies,
Waiting, with desperate calm—the next Assize;
Some miscreant creeps from bed of straw to ask
In vain a respite from his daily task;
Some wretch—who once was woman—whom the times
Have forc'd to seek her pittance from her crimes;
Who soon, releas'd, shall with loud laugh proclaim
Her fix'd insensibility to shame;
Tho' one dark choice her ev'ry thought must haunt—
To live by infamy—or die of want!

C. What then ! shall each, as strikes his fancy, be
Gambler, or drunkard, rake, or debauchee?
Shall mind and form before their prime decay,
And lewd intemperance sap the strength away?
Is such your system? P. Nay : I freely own
That none, till twenty-five, should walk alone.
Yet all must laugh, if men impose restraint,
Who act the sinner, and assume the saint;
Grave moralists o'er youthful follies sigh,—
Whose ev'ry action gives their words the lie;
Increasing vice in modern days bewail;—
Whose sallow features tell another tale:
If tutors punish what they seldom shun,
Severe to all who do—as they have done—
Their wild career at once pursue, condemn;
Give fees to TUCKWELL, and advice to them.

But here are none, who, sleek in plenty, thrive,
Yet scorn the very truths by which they live;
Men of the Church—since to her gifts and stalls
Some easy Bishop, not religion, calls—

Who sneer in secret, and for private ends,
But seek her banners to corrupt her friends;
Who wrest the simple style of sacred writ,
To point the ribaldry, which would be wit;
While, foes to Gibbon and Voltaire profess,
God and the Bible serve them for a jest;
And some low pun, some word's unmeaning play,
Drives e'en their mean hypocrisy away:
No: there are none: well-pleas'd, let candour own
Such baseness here to letter'd breasts unknown.

C. Hither, my friend, why should such men resort,
Who live so well in cities, and at court?

P. True: most are souls, whose dark and icy chill
No sorrows cause to pine, no joys to thrill;
Save where some barrier to their fortune dies;
Save where they lose th' expected benefice.
To such be peace—the constant calm repose,
The deep stagnation of th' eternal doze!
Till, sunk in sloth, their force of mind has ceas'd,
As lakes are muddiest where the stream is least.

Yet there may be, who once was fit to bear
A grander part on life's wide theatre;
Born to give laws, or destin'd to command,
The boast and bulwark of his native land;
Or form'd amidst admiring groups to sit,
"The source of pleasure, and the soul of wit."
One who had beam'd of courts or camps the star;
Reform'd the Senate, or adorn'd the Bar;
Or look'd through nature with excursive eye,
No science too profound; no views too high;
If such be lost to action and to fame,
Thou, Britain, mourn—thou, Oxford, blush for shame!
Alas! that fate and evil stars conspire,
In luckless hour, to quench that noble fire!
His college offers to increase his rents:
"His poverty, but not his will consents."
Confirm'd in gown and band, a Master now,
More solemn seems his step, more cold his brow;
But where the grander thought, the mightier aim?
His mind how chang'd! and scarce his form the same!
Thwarted, sunk, vanish'd, all his hopes decay;
And melt, like snow beneath the sun, away;

Prone by degrees his mental ardor lies,
As limbs grow stiff from want of exercise :
A stunted plant in uncongenial earth,
Droops the sad soul in vigour and in worth ;
At length contracted to the narrow round,
Which heav'n ne'er destin'd, but his wants have found :
The highest good ambition dares conceive,
The Bampton Lecture, or the velvet sleeve !
Lost as the lamp, which glimmers in the tomb,
He shines the meteor of the Common-room.
His joys are dead, ere life is well begun ;
His wit, sense, genius, dwindle to a pun.
Now conscious feeling of superior pow'rs
But swells his heart with pride—with spleen devours.
For oft the madd'ning thought must intervene
Of what he is, and what he might have been.
Then, then he sighs—or with a sickly smile
Starts from the trance of apathy awhile :
Yet sinks as soon—since thought is worse than vain—
To helpless, hopeless, lethargy again.
Oh ! chance or fortune, providence or fate,
Be mine the dreariest lot, the shortest date :

Welcome or grief, or danger's dark abyas :
Yet save me only from a doom like this !

C. Nay : leave to ladies causeless sighs and tears,
And tremblings at imaginary fears !
Ladies there are—and they, who know not such,
Had better know too little than too much—
Ladies there are, who feel, or feign the dread
Of treach'rous snares for simple maidens spread ;
And keep their charms behind the veil or fan,
To guard them from that base seducer, man ;
Who yet might safe 'mid thousand Tarquins move,
Burlesques on beauty, antidotes to love.
'Tis thus, I hold, you dread the college post ;
Denied, despise it ; but obtain'd, would boast.
And why with sacrilege of scorn neglect
That grave demeanour, which should teach respect ?

P. Such is my nature—nature rules us still,
Too deeply rooted to be chang'd at will ;
What, though weak art would mar her settled plan,
And with exotic trappings deck the man ;

In some rash moment fades the labour'd form,
Like paint dissolving when the cheek is warm.
Such is my nature: therefore must I smile,
If solemn jugglers thoughtless youth beguile;
Must think, no cap can mend the head below it,
No gown create philosopher or poet:
Must doubt, if reason always held her torch
To guide the Academus or the Porch:—
Tho' Athens beams, rever'd from length of age,
If all her sages were so very sage!
Not every devotee, who lifts to heav'n
Her pious eyes, may find her faults forgiv'n:
Not ev'ry Don, who folds with sapient air
His arms upon his breast, clasps wisdom there.

C. Young man, beware! 'tis grievous want of sense
To give men in authority offence.

And what your motives? P. Motives!—love of truth,
And pain, when error warps the mind of youth:
Motives, than fear of angry Dons more strong,
And lending vigour to the weakest song!
When Danish Canute loiter'd on the shore,
No wave durst touch a king, his courtiers swore.

Why ebb ye not, ye tides?—a monarch stands
 To claim obedience, and ye seek the sands!
 Yes! they roll'd on, by mightier nature bound,
 And bade the monarch vanish—or be drown'd.

C. Yet surely praise is better taste, than blame.

P. Well: come then praise: and come to all the same!
 Come, Panegyric, tickling letter'd ears,
 As Burney, Monk, and Blomfield praise their peers;
 Praise thick, and wholesale, pointing still their pen
 With "mighty heroes," or "most learned men!"
 Come, view the Senior Common-room, and cry
 "What charming talk! how wit and wisdom vie!"
 Yet there are some, of pride and dinner full,
 Grave, and sedate, and keens'd to be dull;
 Their mouths so busy, and so good their fare,
 How should inquiry's spirit enter there?
 All local themes—till haply one succeed
 Of sprightlier tone—I guess not what indeed—
 Yet one there is, which ev'ry temper hits,
 Can suit all ages, and inspire all wits,

This were not much :—but oft we see with pain
Infectious dulness spoil the younger vein ;
And bind the gownsman to a single set
With the close chains of form and etiquette :
While poor Discourse, a prisoner on parole,
Forbidden seems o'er Maudlin-bridge to stroll ;
But hovers, like a crippled bird, about
The college walls, and settles on a Scout.
Tho' e'en dull politics were some relief,
The last new novel, or the last new thief.

C. For heav'n's sake stop ! nor let thy ceaseless tongue
Run on in rhyming prose through right and wrong.

P. Alas ! the crowding faults fatigue my eyes,
And follies still, like Alps on Alps, arise :
E'en could I have,—as Pope and Homer sing,
And witting poets,—on each lighter string,—
A throat of brass, with thousand tongues supplied,
And lungs of steel—and God knows what beside—
Still some, I fear, would want their just renown ;
Unsung their glories, and their names unknown !

For who may tell, how Dons would vainly dress,
In pomp of mien, internal nothingness,
And, like the ostrich, some few reeds between,
Because they see not, think themselves unseen :
How Bachelors, of time's slow march afraid,
Must drawl the nonsense which they never made ;
While the grave, patient Master keeps his chair,
And counts the seconds with a judge's air :
How still—blush, Oxford, blush to hear it told—
Survives the Monkish mummary of old :
How libraries in learned rows are spread,
With books admir'd and quoted—never read :
How glittering volumes shine in gaudy pride—
For strangers to admire their gilt outside :
How some gay Tutor, while he pockets pounds,
More rarely sees his pupils, than the hounds ;
For let them fail or prosper, sink or swim,
Most mighty Nimrod ! what are they to him ?
Or how some leech of greatness bows him down
To the gold tassel, or the silken gown :
How—*C.* Have a care ! let Scotch Reviewers write
These idle calumnies, as false as trite ;

Distort the truth; with stupid rancour ply
The oft-told tale, the long-exploded lie.
Adopt not thou the hireling scribbler's trade:
The worst of villains is a renegade.
Or turn at least your satire's muddy stream,
Nor make poor Oxford an eternal theme.
What! shall the guardian of the rising race
Be like the painting in the market-place,
Where ev'ry country critic us'd to halt,
And smear his greasy finger o'er a fault?
Yet, 'mid such libels, still she stands unhurt,
Too strong to dread a cannonade of dirt;
Still, as her years increase, her honour grows,
And all assaults recoil upon her foes.
But *apropos*, there is a story told—

P. One of your own? C. Oh no, indeed, quite old.
I swear not, mind, if it be false, or true;
But, as it suits our purpose, it will do.

A statue once, Apollo, Jove, or Pan,
Look'd, in the moonlight, like an honest man:

A drunken Lord came muttering half a song,
And, full of wine and valour, reel'd along
Just where he should not. "Damn it! can't you stir?"
"Why did you let me run against you, Sir?"
And first, 'tis said, he challeng'd it outright
To meet with pistols at the dawn of light.
It mov'd not, spoke not: so his Lordship thought
He'd best chastise the scoundrel on the spot.
Then straight attacks the statue where it stood,
Breaks his own fist, and covers it with blood:
Till, tir'd of victory, slow he stumbles on,
Exulting in the thoughts of glory won:
"Well, as I hope, I've taught him manners now,
"And, by my soul! he ne'er return'd a blow!"

How weak your censure, while these scenes engage
The ripest studies of the rising age!
The first in wealth, or talent, birth, or mind,
To raise our Church, or guard our Law design'd,
Here must they come: here sacred Science gives
A stamp and sanction to their future lives!

P. There, there it is: in bodies of less weight
 Who cares, their follies and their faults how great?
 Here creep no errors but the land must feel;
 But must endanger Britain's common weal.
 Nor here, alas! the mighty mischief ends,
 But taints our schools, and from our schools ascends.
 Thus patriot zeal inspires my humble strain,
 And bids me wish perfection—tho' in vain.

C. What?—wish perfection! wish it on the earth!
 Go then, endow a college,—give it birth!
 Is that impossible?—then check thy spleen,
 And praise the best of systems which have been:
 Think, what great names have risen from Oxford's stock,
 Bacon, Boyle, Johnson, Addison, and Locke:
 At humble distance trace their bright career,
 Nor scorn the rules which made them what they were!

P. Yes: sages hence have risen: and Granta too
 Boasts sages, poets, wits, as well as you.
 But such I count not: such were never form'd
 By college rules, with college studies warm'd:

Such men must rise, tho' deep in deserts set,
And burst a Timour, or a Mahomet:
Bound by no laws, no steady course they keep;
But through the world, like rapid comets sweep.
Isis! howe'er their deeds, or counsels shine,
Not thine their labours, nor their honours thine!
What's Leipsic's plain, Montmartre's height, to thee,
Tho' vet'ran Blucher walks an L.L.D.?
No: view the gen'ral swarm, which life must draw
From Oxford to the Senate, Church, or Law:
Their strength or grace shall college learning rear
More than the cassock, or the wig they wear?

Still it is true, that Isis fairly claims
Her names illustrious—now, alas! but names.
Or, just to living science, yet may smile
To see her GAISFORD, and her ELMSLEY toil;
From ancient bards clear misty doubts away,
Nor clog with comments what is clear as day.
Too happy authors; could they 'scape the clutch
Of murd'ring German, and laborious Dutch:
For vast the herd, who urge the curs'd pretence
To mend the reading and expound the sense.

His crude conjectures first a dreamer pours:
A second blots them : and a third restores.
Another comes—he too must shew his taste—
First, second, third, are all alike effac'd.
Thus on your walls, ye prisons of the town,
Fade short-liv'd bills, scarce sooner up, than down :
Obscur'd too soon by heaps of newer stuff,
Quack yields to quack, and puff succeeds to puff !

Still deep divines are ours : and ours the lot
To boast a Peel, a Grenville, and a Scott.
Masters there are, who keep in durance here
Talents, most worthy of the widest sphere :
Tutors, as grateful feelings bid me say,
Who want but scope to give their genius play :
Rich in all learning, in religion sound,
With humour wise, with elegance profound ;
Who praise, and who pursue, the liberal plan,
Which forms at once, the scholar and the man.

He too, was here, whose bright undying ray—
Why sav'd it not his college from decay ?

Yet still that college lives—tho' empty halls,
And silent eloquence of mould'ring walls,
Tell, how one doom awaits the great and sage;
And Science yields to Fashion and to Age:—
Yet still it lives—the memory of that name
Secures a bright eternity of fame;
To patriots dear shall be the patriot's home,
And where Fox was, oblivion dares not come!

C. Well then, my friend, almost we are agreed;
Our words at variance, but the same our creed.
And you, methinks, although a Whig in part,
Love Church, and State, and Isis too, at heart.
Yet why her faults—if faults she has—proclaim,
Foe to her rules, and traitor to her fame?

P. Because I wish those faults to have an end:
Because I am no flatt'rer, but her friend:
Because I know, that real foes deride,
With sneering jest, her bigotry and pride;
Tell, how her boasted learning keeps confin'd
The growth of reason, and the stretch of mind.

How LOCKE was banish'd in contemptuous sort,
And GIBBON found but "prejudice and port."

C. Name then the means.—P. Good Sir, I don't
pretend:

All may deplore, what very few can mend.
Pow'r must reform: 'tis mine alone to see
That such things are, and wish them not to be:
'Tis mine to wish, that Science, just and plain,
Should drop her errors, and extend her reign;
Pure Mathematics fix the mind of youth
On the firm basis of eternal truth;
Be scann'd Weight's, Number's, Figure's, Motion's laws,
And from the vast effects inferr'd th' Almighty cause:
Sublime Philosophy shine clear, and fraught
With power of words, and energy of thought;
Yet none be deem'd, in learning's seat, to waste
Their hours on classic elegance and taste;
On Helicon's fair dreams, whose soft control
Refines all worldlier feelings of the soul!
Thus form'd and strengthen'd, Science rears her throne,
By sceptics dreaded, and to fools unknown.

Oh, Oxford ! mighty with majestic tow'rs,
Lovely with shade of academic bow'rs—
Thus may'st thou draw new dignity from age ;
Thus claim thy part in history's brightest page ;
Defend Religion, and instruct the State,
The first in wisdom, as the first in weight.
Heroes shall hence, and legislators rise,
Bold in the field, and in the council wise :
Here native bards to future time convey
The mighty magic of the moral lay :
Here England's sons, while life is fresh and bright,
With virtue, peace ; with study, blend delight ;
Mature taste, feeling, principle ; and raise,
With feats of eld, the fire of younger days :
Then men, and patriots, deaf to factious brawls ;
Foremost, where honour or their country calls :
To her and heav'n their ripen'd talents yield,
And run their high career on glory's ample field !
As, first, the rower's inexperience'd strength
Plies the small skiff the safer Cherwell's length ;
Soon, proud of skill, assembled crowds he braves,
Where silver Isis boasts her broader waves :

What time his course the summer sun has stay'd,
And softer evening spreads the gath'ring shade;
While beauty walks the banks; and music round
Sheds o'er the heart th' enchanting pow'r of sound;
And gazers, from each hall and college stand,
Cheer their own boat, and anxious urge to land;
When back from Iffley the swift oars are heard,
Dash in the stream,—tho' scarce the stream is stirr'd—
The steersman shouts; the gallant crew rows on;
And toil is pleasure if the race be won.
As, here, young Isis rolls, in laughing pride,
Through classic scenes her unpolluted tide;
With more of beauty than of grandeur flows;
Sounds but of joy disturb the calm repose:
Soon ships and commerce crowd the mightier stream,
And deck the bosom of majestic Thames.

END OF THE SECOND DIALOGUE.

THE
HISTORY OF THE
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FROM THE
EARLIEST PERIODS
TO THE PRESENT
BY
JOHN SMITH
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
IN TWO VOLUMES
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THE
OXFORD SPY;
IN VERSE.
DIALOGUE THE THIRD.

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THE
OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE FOURTH.

“ ———— Nothing extenuate,
“ Nor set down aught in malice.”

SECOND EDITION.

OXFORD:
FOR MUNDAY AND SLATTER, HERALD-OFFICE.
1818.

THE
OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

DIALOGUE THE FOURTH.

P. **ONCE** more, my friend, on calm discussion bent,
Come, let us use the reason God has lent;
Idly once more converse an hour away,
And please ourselves, whate'er the rest may say:
But sick at length, and weary to descry
How single follies bubble, break, and die,
At petty faults no longer let us shoot,
But boldly raise the axe and strike the root;
Prove, from a ground-work weak, and badly laid,
How frail must be the superstructure made;
Assert thought's liberty, and judgment's right,
And drag reluctant error full to light.

D 4

A 3

C. Where are you now?—why let such phrenzy bear
Your hurrying course of mind—you know not where?
In time desist—all think your words the dreams
Of wild ambition's disappointed schemes;
That you, like patriots, with no patriot views,
From blighted hopes, and private spleen abuse.

P. So let them think—though wide their fancies fall,
'Tis at least something, that they think at all.
But you, who know me, know my nobler aim,
No puny longing for the bubble fame:
Long have I learnt to pass it careless by,
And hear another prais'd without a sigh;
My only wish to tear the mask away,
Till palsied follies fade in open day;
Remove th' illusive film, by which is thrown
O'er learned fraud a splendour not its own.
For who, unmov'd, can see such follies rest,
Because they suit their kind preservers best?
As Indian priests their senseless Pagod raise,
Enrich'd by gifts, which superstition pays;
Or Monks preserv'd with rev'rence scraps of wood,
A malefactor's bones, or marks of blood;

Then "lo! the blessed cross:" or "view," they said,
"The bones of saints, the blood, which martyrs shed!"
The crafty thrive, because the most are blind,
And fatten on the follies of mankind.

C. Still, still, the same—you thus by dribblets pour
Your changeless venom to torment the more;
As when slow falls the water, drop by drop,
Permitted neither to flow fast nor stop,
Acutest pangs the writhing victim try,
Torture the most, and let the latest die.

P. No: a good end by honest means I seek,
Condemn'd to see, and not afraid to speak:
And if but small effects attend the few,
'Tis fair to try, what many strokes will do.
For, this the truth—emerg'd from Gothic night,*
First partial Science gave a glimm'ring light:

* If any thing advanced in this Dialogue appears a repetition of what has been said in a former one, the excuse must be, that truth can hardly be told too often; and that the writer wishes in sober seriousness, that these sentiments should make their impression.

When in the cloister's misanthropic shade
The generous vigour of the mind decay'd;
When no bright visions fann'd ambition's flame;
No female smile urg'd manhood on to fame;
But beauteous maids in gloomy convents pin'd;
Their feeling deaden'd—not their souls resign'd—
Conscious of weakness, Popes implanted here
Dark disputations, offspring of their fear;
Scholastic mumm'ry hid, or banish'd, truth,
And poison'd all the common-sense of youth:
There in the maze of subtle jargon lost,
The strongest reason could but err the most;
As through some marsh who strives his way to win,
The more he labours, flounders deeper in.
Some parts are now cast off—and some remain—
Thus incongruity is all we gain:
For till the whole, from base to top, shall fall,
'Twere better nothing had been done at all:
Since then, like Rome, unwieldy, and o'ergrown,
From its own weight had sunk the fabric down:
But some small sense is mix'd, we must allow,
To make the patchwork call'd a system now.

Now Popes are pow'rless—yet our studies trace ;
The discipline, views, genius, of the place :
All insufficient, cramp'd, ill-judg'd, appear ;
Confin'd, yet tedious ; though minute, severe :
With useless forms, and disquisitions fraught ;
Yet leaving necessary things untaught.
Rise then, ye Jesuits, and with glad surprise
In Oxford still St. Omers recognise ;
Ye sophist Monks, here burst to life anew,
Your sun once set in height meridian view !
Books should teach life ; connect the mighty link
Of past, and present ; and cause men to think ;
But what are they, unless to use applied ?
Or what is learning, but as action's guide ?
Yet words, not things, from ev'ry book are sought,
To load the mem'ry—not improve the thought—
Dates, places, names, a valley, or a plain,
“ Confusion, worse confounded,” fill the brain.
The gownsman jumbles in his aching head,
Rivers, long dry ; and one-eyed men, long dead ;
Kens little points, where still suspicions lurk,
That some old woman must have been at work ;

But leaves the gen'ral scope and tenor free
For such—as need not read for a degree :
While modern languages and modern lore,
Languish unknown ; or lost, if known before.
Nor this alone—but habit's laws confine
The very course of classic discipline :
The same historians, and one single sage,
Complete monopoly of thought engage ;
One only road lies open—all pursue
The same dull round, nor dare to break it through.

Oh ! if the letter'd gownsmen never thought
Of learning more, than Alma Mater taught ;
This Oxford sage might tell you in a trice
How pigmies fought with cranes, or frogs with mice ;
Yet think, perhaps, these gentry fought again
On Stamboul's tow'rs, or Pavia's fatal plain ;
Might tell how Jason first his sails unfurl'd,
And coasted for a sheep-skin round the world ;
And yet poor man, might never chance to hear,
Who found, or nam'd, another hemisphere.
He knows what monsters bred in Scythian frost—
Ask him who peopled England—he is lost.

From him are chemistry's dark-secrets hid?
Oh no ! he knows what mighty Midas did ;
Chemist profound ! who gold from all things carv'd ;
Yet like his luckless followers nearly starv'd !
And stuff'd with long-liv'd Indian's longer tales,
Might just enquire, if Calmucs live in Wales.
Yet say, shall prejudice uncheck'd preside,
And wave her night-shade in protected pride?
The Stagyrte be confirmation strong,
And Latin Logic mingle right and wrong?

Not long ago, as half asleep I lay,
But dreamt at night the studies of the day,
This vision came. Where Oxford elders sate,
And held their Sanhedrim in solemn state,
In sudden haste an aged form appear'd,
And shook the shadowy honours of his beard :
Though deep dismay'd, he bore in either hand,
Dark, pond'rous tomes ; and mov'd in gown and band ;
With goodly paunch, and long mis-shapen head,
And seeming, for a spirit, not ill-fed.
Though lines of thought 'twas seldom giv'n to trace
On the wide level of that vacant face ;

Now o'er the rueful void disorder came,
Mixture sublime of sorrow, fear, and shame !
" Logic" upon his brow was graven bright ;
Yet now his words were natural from fright.
" Hunted by all, despis'd, abus'd, I come—
" You, my last hope—and this, my only home—
" My friends, in sorrow faithful found alone !
" Since Greeks, and Monks, and Jesuits all are gone—
" If e'er I thwarted truth, the mind misled,
" Puzzled the wise, and turn'd the weaker head ;
" Oh ! view my fallen dignity : and vow
" To shield me from the foes who crush me now !
" Th' ungrateful moderns mock my sore distress :
" With hate relentless Truth and Reason press,
" See, see, e'en now they come !—like ghosts that shun
" The dawn, and vanish at the rise of sun ;
" These upstart lights unhappy must I fly,
" Or, bound for ever, steep'd in Lethe, lie.
" Yet save me, save me !—think, how well I taught
" The rights of wrong, and sweet disorder wrought !
" No more must I on Isis' margin sport,
" Make the straight, crooked, and perplex the short !

"No more"—alas! the keen pursuers reach
 The king of words, and stop his dying speech.
 The sages gaz'd in silence, pitied, wept:
 One in advance to save him, boldly stept:
 Whom Reason bade, obedient to her laws,
 Contend and conquer in a better cause:
 Him they bore down to Stygian gloom their prey,
 Shrieking his own dilemma all the way!

There let him lie—there make his fav'rite schisms,
 Till Styx itself shall echo syllogisms;
 My dream, though sent through neither gate, is true;
 For thrice I dreamt it—near the morning too.
 Yet, Oxford, say, without a friend, like this,
 And questions fram'd on false hypothesis;
 "Without the smile, from partial logic won,
 "Oh! what wert thou?—a world without a sun!"*

C. Come, come, with Gothic times let visions cease:
 In God's name, let the dead repose in peace!

* In the opinion of the deepest commentators this is the true reading of the passage in "the Pleasures of Hope:" if so, it should be immediately restored.

Hope not your fame by such device to lift,
The bungling poet's miserable shift :
As some stuck Greek, unable to escape,
Ungrateful, brings his gods into the scrape;
Puts reason, sense, consistency, aside,
And cuts the knot, which could not be untied !
My stomach turns, when forms of giant size
Shake the scar'd earth, and wrapt in clouds arise ;
When come the noiseless step, the hollow groans,
The glaring eye-balls, and the rattling bones.
Scarce can we bear, since darker days are o'er,
The ghost of Hamlet, or of Polydore.

But to return—shall ancient rules give way
To ev'ry upstart notion of a day ?
Or shall a body of our weight adopt
Each idle theory at random dropt ?
Each fresh-blown fancy, knaves or fools invent,
Without sense, reason, thought, experiment ?
Like Gall, and Spurzheim, tell the wise or dull ;
And measure brains by feeling round the skull ?
Owen of Lanark ! thy great plans adore,
And live in common, like our sires of yore ?

Believe that mind is matter ; matter mind ;
And veer to ev'ry point with ev'ry wind ?
Or would you tear our glorious structure down,
To raise some puny building of your own ?
As when some mighty fabric claims a sigh
For the past glories of the days gone by ;
Though scarce its strength impair'd ; though scarce
defaced

By time the lovely vestiges of taste ;
The soulless rustics come, and, one by one,
Strip massy fragments of disjointed stone ;
Their barb'rous hands with ceaseless pillage glut,
And spoil the temple to erect the hut !
Thus soon would awful orthodoxy fall,
And Quacks and Methodists be Lords of all.

P. Yet chapels, rear'd in orthodoxy's spite,
Like Gorgon visions, petrify the sight.
But this is nothing ;—fools were never few ;—
Fools there must be—or what are knaves to do ?
Nor can our church a single taunt provoke :
Our bigot learning is the standing joke.

And some there are—nor let their words deceive—
Who laugh a little in the lengthen'd sleeve :
For must we only Aristotle quote,
And all his Treatises be learnt by rote ?

C. They strengthen reason. *P.* And can nought be
found

To strengthen reason, in itself more sound ;
While Bacon, Paley, pour their flood of light,
To shame the doctrines of the Stagyrte ?
If nature hints, that time may still unfold
New lights, and wisdom add them to the old ;
If I dare think, that science has reveal'd
To Bacon truths, from all before conceal'd ;
Where is my crime ?—Must reason yield the cause,
If awful Aristotle issues laws ;
And, as his royal pupil sway'd mankind,
Would claim despotic empire o'er the mind :—
Nay : more than Philip's son in arms could do,
Would rule by dogmas, and for ever too ?
What ! in this age, when narrow views are flown,
And thought is free, and bigotry unknown ;

This age of licence, when the worst may deem
Their right secure to libel, lie, blaspheme ;
Here still shall doctrines, though from sense estrang'd,
Like laws of Medes and Persians, rest unchang'd ?
Shall old decisions curb the mind's free scope,
And science own a literary Pope ?
No : praise the master genius ; but deny
To aught on earth infallibility.

C. Unhappy sage : the shallow moderns' hate !
Too closely wise : too deeply intricate !
What's most unlike themselves, or wrong, or right,
Disgusts them still—Moors paint their devils white.
Yet were it well to boast some better claim—
First learn to understand, then dare to blame.

P. Blame ! is then rev'rence of his sacred name,
And wonder at his depth of reason blame ?
No : cloth'd in words, strong, plain, precise, where each
Has weight of sense, and scorns the flow'rs of speech :
Nations admir'd the page with science fraught,
And monarchs honour'd what a sage had taught.

D 4

B

His mighty labours mock the march of time,
And tower in wisdom's majesty sublime ;
Yet from the foolish praise of one dull sect
Who keep what, living, he would now reject ;
Champions of error, reason's growth they blight,
And stop the rising beams of younger light
As some tall mountain, ere the day is done,
Athos, or Atlas, intercepts the sun :
The mighty shade along the shore is thrown,
And clouds the deep with darkness not its own.
But I have done :—no subtle wrangler I :
You boast, like all the rest, Philosophy.

Ah poor Philosophy ! thou injur'd name,
On which the dreams of madmen mount to fame ;
With which mankind their sev'ral systems dub,
In courts, or wilds, the garden or the tub ;
Thou, like thy stone, nor seen, nor understood ;
"The greatest evil, or the greatest good :"
Claim'd by all nations—though possess'd by few—
Chaldee, Greek, Scythian, Turk, Chinese, Hindoo :

Something, or nothing: yet with rev'rence heard,
 Dissecting now a world, and now a word;
 Or measuring earth; or tracing nature's plan;
 Combining atoms, or instructing man;
 Deist, or Atheist, turning schemes about,
 Till feeling, sense, existence seem a doubt:
 Quibbling with Pyrrho, or with Plato taught
 To lift to heav'n soul, spirit, hope, and thought:
 Now sowing discord; now to peace the guide;
 The friend of wisdom; or the tool of pride;
 Next teaching holier truths, from heav'n proclaim'd,
 Than ever reason found, or fancy fram'd:
 Or soaring upwards, mid the spheres to stray,
 With Newton, Ptolemy, or Tycho Brahe:
 More lately seen, with falsehood's baneful breath,
 To sever friends, and fill a realm with death;
 Proving, that all things differ but in name;
 Truth, error, virtue, vice, themselves the same;
 And bidding villains triumph in the trust,
 That man is mortal, and the soul but dust;
 And o'er Religion's prostrate form advance
 The hopeless dark divinity of chance!

Oh ! sacred sound of ev'ry tongue and clime ;
Nor bound by space, nor circumscrib'd by time ;
Loud, universal, mighty, like the wind
Which all may feel and hear, but none may find ;
Still heard with mingled rev'rence, love, and fear ;
Say, heaven-born Science, say, what art thou here ?
Say, dost thou flourish, skill'd in deep intents,
Sublime inventions, nice experiments ?
Or dost thou love, as Bacon taught, to trace
The book of Nature with the book of Grace ?
Or track the planets, and observe the tide,
High as the heaven, and as the ocean wide ?
Blush, poor philosophy, oh ! blush to own
Thy influence dead, thy very name unknown ;
Or only taught, in dull dispute, to brood
O'er names, and terms, a figure, and a mood !

C. Heavens ! what a show'r of words ! how long, and
loud,

It rolls, and rumbles, like a thunder-cloud !
Yet sounding words no solid sense may bear :
Loud bursts the bubble only fill'd with air.

And heaven forbid, that Oxford should advance
 To greet the new Philosophy of France:
 Or metaphysics English youth should spoil,
 The rankest produce of the German soil !
 Why name Philosophy? With pain we see
 What gloomy poets mean it now to be :*

* Whatever may be the poetry of the present age, the philosophy contained in it is certainly the most monstrous system ever invented ; and if the contagion spreads, it is difficult to say what will become of generous sympathy, or honourable ambition. It would be an amusing speculation to trace the various characters, which have been exhibited as heroes by different writers in different ages ; to mark the distinction between the heroes of Homer and Virgil, Tasso and Ariosto ; between the heroes of Gothic enchantment, or romantic chivalry ; till we come to the seductive tenderness of the French novelists, or the sickly sentimentality of the German drama. The hero now in fashion is an anomalous being, proud in his own weakness, and deriving a sort of diseased happiness from the consciousness of his own misery ; hating the world, and rejoicing in the world's hatred ; a being, who by every method in his power brings ruin upon himself, and then pretends to complain of the efficacy of his efforts ; with all the extravagant absurdities of a Quixote, but without any of the liberal feelings ; who makes personal dignity to consist in every mark of an unamiable temper, or an alarmed conscience, the haggard features, hurried step, and ferocious aspect ; and mental dignity, in gloomy pride, and senseless despondency. Who would at first think that all this is only another way of disguising the vanity of the human heart ?

A self-tormenting fiend, which feeds on pain,
Yet dares of misery, which it caus'd, complain ;
Whence form'd are men, whose wild ambitious views
Soon " furnish matter for the tragic Muse !"
Too soon they mar the opening scenes of life,
With dark intrigues, and unsuccessful strife :
Blind, warring wishes, set the soul on fire
In the deep chaos of uncurb'd desire ;
Till passion reigns on reason's overthrow,
And thought becomes an instrument of woe :
O'er the chill brow still flits th' eternal smile,
Though burning cares consume the heart the while ;
As lies on Ætna's breast th' unmelted snow,
Though quenchless flames for ever roll below.
Deep in their souls the furious passions dwell,
And for themselves make their own thoughts a hell.
They mount the various scales of guilt and care
To the full climax of intense despair :
In self-sought death the finish'd drama stops ;
And o'er the mangled form the pitying curtain drops.

Not such the old philosophy, whose scope
Was firm endurance, or unwearied hope;
Calm as the majesty of Grecian forms;
Or their pure sky, scarce capable of storms;
Or sternly good, too haughty to complain,
Forbade to feel, or to acknowledge pain:
Or wise with pleasure, and with temperance gay,
Smil'd at the world, and laugh'd its griefs away;
Or daring far above this earth to climb,
Weigh'd heaven with man; eternity with time;
Trusted their gods' kind providence would last,
And rule the future, as they rul'd the past.
This virtue's essence—hence, they taught, arise
Her grandest, loveliest, most endearing ties:
First to give happiness; this simple law
From nature's scheme the human mind may draw:—
And next to bless it, when to others given,
And view with joy th' indulgent care of heaven;
Cherish and love all things beneath the sun—
This man should do—for this his God has done.

Oh! if what God has made him, man would be,
Pure in his thoughts, and in his feelings free,

He yet were happy. Who can gaze on earth,
Where mighty nature gives such beauty birth;
Nor feel his soul with calm delight o'erflow,
Nor own her joys our purest bliss below?
The fresh'ning breeze of morning to inhale,
Or softer breathings of the evening gale:
To feel the spring's or summer's charms display'd,
The flow'ry fragrance, or the vocal shade:
View the bright tints of autumn's deep serene,
Or solemn stillness of the winter scene:
To stand entranc'd upon the mountain's brow,
Or near some rapid river's rushing flow;
Whether a pleasing silence hush the air,
Or the wild winds contend and madden there:
To view the earth, and heaven, and ocean rise
With millions crowding in the pride of life:
And the red sun, like some vast giant, rise;
Or setting, tinge the water and the skies;
Then gaze upon those waters, and that sky,
Which seem to meet at distance to the eye:
To see the depths with fires of æther glow,
And heaven, as seen above, appear below:

Then upwards gaze ; and in the firmament
View stars unnumber'd light the vast extent ;
And think how other worlds, beyond, unknown,
Have stars, moons, planets, systems of their own :
All, all is rapturous !—ev'ry feeling, given
From nature pure, refines the soul for heaven,
Till warm with gratitude it soars above,
In thrilling awe and universal love.
Yet man, these natural feelings all destroy'd,
Makes his own heart a wide and aching void ;
And blind to beauty, deaf to music's strain,
Nature for him is beautiful in vain !
And this he calls philosophy :—for this
His breast is clos'd to calm, self-off'ring bliss !
By heaven ! there's not a tribe, that blithely glides
Through the vast ocean's tributary tides :
There's not a beast, that roams the forest, blest
To quench his hunger, and enjoy his rest ;
No bird, that loves her native spot ; or sweeps
O'er the wide waters of the mighty deeps :
There's not an insect, basking in the sun,
That lives its little day, and dies when day is done,
But what, while blest, pursuing nature's plan,
Might shame the proud philosophy of man.

To them no varied joys their beings give ;
Enough for them to live, and feel they live.
But man creates a drearier darker doom,
In self-taught pain, and artificial gloom :
Yet this he calls philosophy—and smiles
If natural bliss some artless breast beguiles !
But why did he, whom Athens deem'd most wise,
Say, “ no man can be happy, till he dies ?”
For say, is this our reason, this our sense ;—
To stop our hearts to nature's influence ?
Though pains and sorrows soon must come, to sigh
O'er certain evils, which we cannot fly ?
Or darkling rush on voluntary ills,
Till care corrodes, or disappointment chills ?
Deaden our feelings, blunt our souls to joy ;
Yet proudly grieve that human pleasures cloy ?
Oh ! wiser he, who sees the mighty sun
High in the heavens his course of splendour run ;
And thinks his God thus lights the glowing pole,
Till rapturous rev'rence swells his gladden'd soul !
Happier, who views, secure from earthly taint,
The beauteous image of his patron-saint ;
Celestial trust, and holy transport, proves ;
Gazes entranc'd : at once adores, and loves !

Wiser and happier, that lone rambler nigh,
O'er whom, in diff'rent moods, we smile or sigh ;
Though smiles but mock ; and seldom is exempt
Compassion's sigh from feelings of contempt !

If, while our footsteps tread some distant scene,
Fond memory lingers where our home has been ;
Till years fly backward at her swift control,
And former pleasures soothe the sadden'd soul ;
Say, what dear object rises from the spot,
Which childhood lov'd, nor manhood e'er forgot ?
Oh, not the pile, where taste with grandeur vies,
And wealth has lavish'd all that art supplies ;
But the grey ruin, or the mould'ring stone,
Which tells of happier days, and glories gone.
Thus thou, far hence, our future theme shall be ;
And thought shall turn, poor Bickerton, to thee !
While men, like moths, in quick succession bred,
Here shine their little season and are fled :
While all the young, the witty, and the gay,
Pass unlamented, and unmiss'd, away ;
Thee, Oxford oft shall name, remember long,
As one, far separate from her vulgar throng ;

No worldling thou, of dull lethargic breast,
In thoughts, words, feelings, moulded by the rest ;
Thy manlier mind assumes no borrow'd tone—
Whate'er thy weaknesses—at least thy own !
What ! though strange visions fire thy wilder'd brain,
Thy dress disorder'd, and uncheck'd thy strain !
What ! though some pedant smile to see thee stray
With large umbrella in the clearest day ;
Or lounge on Isis' banks ; and feel no awe
To sit mid sages of the Church and Law !
Or, if thou lov'st in idly pensive mood
O'er human woes and vanities to brood,
And half to anger, half to mirth inclin'd,
Upbraid the crimes and madness of mankind ;
Should he, to make his own dull sense allow'd,
Pity thy weakness, in that pity proud ;
Or dare, unconscious of his own estate,
Insult with seeming sympathy thy fate ;
Still reason's self might bid thee not repine—
If fame be worth our wishes—thou hast thine !
And oh ! if radiant fancy's meteor gleam
Can gild the colouring of thy darkest dream ;
If hope can cheer thee, till thou leav'st behind
The loss of station, and the wreck of mind ;

If thou canst rest, while others seek the pole,
To chase their languid listlessness of soul ;
If thou canst laugh, while all around are sad,
And very reason drives the wisest mad ;
Oh, surely, then our feelings chang'd should be—
Thou pity us—and we must envy thee !

P. Aye—but, my friend, our poets only strive
To fire the fancy, keep the soul alive :
Sworn foes to grammar, 'twere the worst offence
To think that aught they said was vulgar sense.
Besides, you reason surely much amiss,
To use a mode of argument like this.
For what, though thousand follies round you view—
Another's fault is no excuse for you.
First heal yourselves :—they still the loudest rail
At others' frailties, who themselves are frail.
Shrink as you may, the question still recurs ;
Are there not points in which the system errs ?
Are there not errors, which reflect disgrace
On all the studies, where they hold a place ;
Which to wish gone all thinking minds agree ?—
And if there are, why cease they not to be ?
On this must rest, o'erpast our weary way,
The scope of all I said, or meant to say :

To this, in plain, decisive terms reply—
Yield if you must—and if you can, deny!

C. No: there are not: the system, branch and¹ root
Is good complete, perfection absolute.

P. Enough, my friend!—raise, Oxford, raise thy pride!
One of thy sons, by heaven, is satisfied!
What! though the nation smile, that Dons approv'd
Move, in dull state, as Dons before them mov'd;
And deeming reason useless, thought insane,
Give their free agency to heaven again;
They scorn the laughter loud, the murmur deep;
And, nobly callous to derision, sleep!
What, though the world no more thy name revere—
Thou still disdain'st its unenlighten'd sneer;
Canst still thy mumm'ry, forms, and logic prize;
And praise the most, what most the rest despise;
As some fond mother fosters in her breast
And ever loves the weakest child the best!
To me 'tis nothing: weal, or woe betide,
My mind is wayward, and the world is wide.
I go: your life may better fates attend!
Farewell, my country, and adieu, my friend!

C. Go then infatuate! go, and cease to claim
All hopes of praise, or profit, wealth, or fame;
And when intrusive disappointment rears
Her thousand shapes, and dark in all appears;
When thy soul blighted, and thy vigour gone,
Still impotent ambition lingers on,
Then shall this thought a double pang impart—
None but thyself has made thee, what thou art!

P. I ask no more; whate'er my fate may be,
Still be that fate procur'd by none but me:
Still be it mine to rise or fall alone—
My good, or evil fortune,—still my own!
Now the bright beams of earlier hope are fled:
If fame e'er fir'd me—it is cold and dead:
Yet should approval deign awhile to raise
These unambitious toils; be this my praise:
No secret malice, no distemper'd spleen,
Has gall'd me on to plant a wound unseen;
No wish to taint a younger breast prevail'd,
That none might prosper, where myself had fail'd:
But by no ties of prejudice confin'd,
I claim'd the charter of th' unfetter'd mind;
Deem'd mine own senses things not given in vain,
And judg'd, as careless to be judg'd again;

Flatter'd no follies, and no honours sought ;
But freely utter'd, what I freely thought !

C. Kind heaven, and sober sense, the rest defend
From thoughts like thine—and thine in time amend !
At last we but pursue the gen'ral plan ;
Talk long and loud, and end as we began.

END OF THE FOURTH DIALOGUE.

THE
OXFORD SPY;

IN VERSE.

Dialogue the Fifth.

~~~~~  
Something too much of this ; but now 'tis past.

CHILDE HAROLD, Canto III.

~~~~~  
OXFORD:
FOR MUNDAY AND SLATTER, HERALD-OFFICE.

1819.

1894

1895

1896

1897

1898

1899

1900

ADVERTISEMENT.

Some apology may be necessary for intruding an already threadbare subject again upon the notice of the University. I have a very simple one to offer: in writing the former Dialogues of the Oxford Spy, I had little or no hope, that they would prove any thing more than a mere ephemeral production; and the greater part of them, therefore, had nothing farther in view, than the purpose of temporary and local amusement. The present Dialogue, it is hoped, may be found something better: and may assist, in its humble sphere, that spirit of rational inquiry, which is now generally prevalent, and which must, sooner or later, be successful in the attainment of its

object. I will not pretend to say—and probably I should not be believed if I did—that I feel no anxiety about the opinion which may be formed of its poetical merits, or demerits : but I can assert with truth, that I care much more about the influence which it may have in overthrowing those parts of our system, which are only retained, because they have been long established ; and in forwarding the introduction or advancement of more useful and necessary studies. I have one thing more to add—and I mention it the more seriously from the principle of doing justice to others and to myself—it is this ; that, as I have myself written nothing connected with this subject, under any other signature ; so no second person has had the smallest share in the design or composition of the Oxford Spy ; of which, therefore, the whole and sole responsibility must of course attach to a single individual.

THE
OXFORD SPY;

DIALOGUE THE FIFTH.

P. If with aright their tale of terror tell,
A little after great Mercurius fell;
When down the pedestal was seen to nod,
As loath to leave its tutelary God;
And stiff the frozen waters stood above, 5
Congeal'd with horror round the form they love;
Through Oxford ran some undefin'd alarm,
A deep and dread surmise of secret harm;
Mysterious whispers next, and dark suspense;
Last the full weight of sad intelligence: 10
Then crowds on crowds came rushing through the gate,
Like wave on wave close-dashing in a strait;
Gownsmen and townsmen throng'd the water's edge,
To gaze upon the dreadful sacrilege:—

Awe-struck they gaz'd, and mute, and bending low 15
 In motionless intensity of woe.
 What meets their fixed eyes?—Alas! they see
 But the void space, where Mercury should be.
 And what, though to and fro some Tutor runs,
 To vent his sorrow in a string of puns; 20
 Though Graduates, Undergraduates, loud and long,
 Prove how the deed was wrong—was very wrong;—
 Yet there, with drooping mien, a silent band,
 Canon and Bedmaker together stand:—
 Grief levels and unites them; common grief, 25
 That seeks in mutual sympathy relief;
 Pride, rank, distinction, were not then confest;
 One master-feeling quite absorb'd the rest:
 In equal horror all alike were seen,
 And shudd'ring, Scouts forgot to cap the Dean. 30

C. Of this enough. P. Too much; but let it stand.
 An illustration of the theme in hand;—
 And nam'd the rather, since by ev'ry tongue
 Gods should not sink unhonour'd and unsung;
 Though much misus'd, and long accounted nipe 35
 To make a bullet or to mend a pipe.

But to that theme— for words like these are vain;
 And graver thoughts become my latest strain—
 Thus there are times, when nicer shades give way
 To some o'erwhelming feeling's master sway; 40
 When all are equal, as some pow'rful call
 Comes to the heart, and comes alike to all.

Thus I—though not to me such task belong;
 Though all unfit my station, age, and song—
 Still while triumphant, honour'd, rich, caress'd, 43
 In garb of ancient wisdom falsely dress'd;
 Here Error safe, as in her fortress, sleeps,
 And modern Science hangs the head, and weeps;
 While cultivated minds, with zeal sincere,
 This phantom of sage discipline revere; 50
 And custom, leagued with precedent, appears
 To sanctify the vain deceit of years;
 Here, even here, again, yet once again,
 I raise an honest, though an idle strain;
 Proud, if such strain may stop our backward course, 55
 And rouse inquiry with increasing force.

Weak at its birth, but mightier day by day,
 Inquiry's spirit drives its onward way;

Like mountain stream, incapable of rest,
 It may be turn'd—it cannot be compress'd— 60
 Methinks I see that spirit rise at length,
 Strong, though it now, unconscious of its strength,
 Lies like a sleeping giant! See it shake
 Its torpor off, and, cloth'd with pow'r, awake!

“If I but stamp,” exulting Pompey cried, 65
 “Legions shall rush to conquer at my side;
 “Triumph and fame my followers still shall be,
 “And Cæsar be o'erwhelm'd, and Rome be free!”
 Meanwhile roll'd danger on, and doubt, and dread,
 And the great Pompey stamp'd in vain, and fled.— 70
 Thus Dons—if, like the bards of ancient date,
 Small things the muse may still compare with great—
 Supinely dream, that Custom's potent sway
 Can frown attacks with silent scorn away;
 Dream, that Improvement's zeal, how'er it grow, 75
 One word can crush, one sapient nod o'erthrow:
 Yet shall it soon resistless force attain,
 And Dons shall nod, and shake their heads, in vain!

Who has not felt—if o'er his idle hours
 E'er her soft influence Contemplation pours— 80

Some thought, though vague, perchance, and undefin'd,
 With sudden pleasure strike th' excursive mind;
 Which, when pursued, distinct, and fuller grown,
 Judgment adopts, and fosters as her own
 The loose ideas, floating on the brain, 85
 Are form'd at last in one continuous chain;
 As erst thy atoms, Epicurus, har'd
 Through boundless space, met, join'd, and fram'd a
 world.

We wander first, where Fancy's track seems bright,
 Because such wand'ring is itself delight; 90
 Yet nobler scenes oft burst at ev'ry turn,
 Than mere Imagination could discern;
 New aims, new prospects, start upon the view,
 And Reason bids us Fancy's path pursue.

Thus I, by sober Meditation led, 95
 Rewake the chords, which wilder visions bred;
 But now with steadier hand:—as o'er my soul
 Maturer thoughts, and graver feelings roll.
 These stop, or turn to sadness, all my mirth,
 And change the child of Fancy ere its birth. 100

Deem, then, not such, my friend, chimeras vain,
 Mere self-deceptions of a fever'd brain :
 Deem not inquiry in itself a crime ;
 Nor scorn the truth because it runs in rhyme !

C. Like how'ring fires, that lead at night astray 105
 Some wand'rer trusting to th' unreal ray ;
 Such visions seize thee, and confirm thy choice,
 Still deaf to Friendship's monitory voice,
 Then must I grieve, that not in thee appears
 Increase of judgment with increase of years : 110
 For if those years, which ever, ere they end,
 Steal from our lives some comfort, hope, or friend,
 No sounder sense, no added wisdom give ;
 For what—but to grow wretched—do we live ?

P. Too true—yet wisdom, though invok'd by all, 115
 Like Glendower's spirits, comes not at their call ;
 Much have I striv'n such thoughts to crush, or shun,
 As saints have wrestled with the Evil One :
 Often have cri'd, " Ye busy dreams, which haunt,
 " By night, by day, my tortur'd soul, avaunt ! 120

" Begone, delusive brood of early pride!
 " Leave me to thoughts, with sober sense supplied;
 " To thoughts, which orthodox, and safe for youth,
 " Must gain in interest what they lose in truth!"

In vain I strive—I cry, abjure, in vain— 125
 Those busy dreams my weak attempts disdain;
 In spite of prudence, and in counsel's spite,
 My good or evil Genius bids me write;
 And mine own mind but more enslav'd I see
 From ineffectual struggles to be free. 130

C. Vain of the very follies, ill-disguis'd
 In mock-repentance, stop, and be advis'd!
 Why grasp those arms thou hast not strength to wield,
 Whose best and only triumph were to yield?—
 Many, whose hopes were bright, have liv'd and died, 135
 Themselves the warning victims to their pride;
 For daring much, from small success obtain'd,
 Loses, or risks, the point already gain'd;
 E'en as the child his rising pile regards,
 Whose young ambition builds the house of cards— 140
 Smiles, as increasing stories meet his eye,
 Each more unstable, as each rais'd more high;

Till tott'ring with its size the fabric grows ;
 And next a motion, or a breath, o'erthrows ;
 With sadd'ning gaze his simple looks deplore 145
 The painted honours scatter'd on the floor.

Must you have morbid feelings ?—In your breast
 Conceal'd, at least, and silent let them rest :
 Nor think your fancies of sufficient worth
 To issue on the wings of slander forth ; 150
 Too like our modern scribblers of renown,
 Who pour the flood of folly on the town,
 In margin'd quartos, or lascivious twelves,
 The theme of half our poets still themselves.

P. Yet e'en this verse may some small good produce,
 And add its tribute to the gen'ral use. 156
 One error banish'd, one defect supplied,
 Be these my trophies—this alone my pride !
 OXFORD, for this thy gifts were well resign'd,
 And cast thy idle honours to the wind. 160

C. 'Tis easy, but unwise, abuse to throw
 On what we would, or what we must forego :

And though not yours th' affected false adulation,
 Which now would scorn what once was sought in vain;
 Yet say, is this a time—when o'er the place 165
 Low party-rage would joy to heap disgrace;
 And hunts, with thirsting zeal, for single flaws,
 Puff'd or with popular, or self-applause—
 Is this a time—if e'en among the crowd
 Of wiser rules some errors are allow'd— 170
 For thee, my friend, on faction's side to lean,
 And aid its petty impotence of spleen?—
 A moment think,—P. Not such my wish, or view;
 For what can party have with us to do?
 Alas! where Science her bright influence throws, 175
 May we not talk of Science in repose?
 Must secret Faction enter, like a guest,
 With dagger hid beneath the banquet-vest?
 Must party, like a pestilence, breathe here
 Contagion foul through Learning's atmosphere? 180

 Perish the man—if such there live—who sees
 Our Colleges and Schools with views like these!
 The public mind with loose suspicion fills
 Of statutes unperform'd, invalid wills;

Patrons and founders of their rights would rob, 185
 And question ancient rules to please the mob,
 That hydra-headed tyrant, blindly led
 By all, who falsely-flattering rumours spread;
 By all, who add fresh fuel to their flame
 Of headstrong hate, and misdirected blame; 190
 All, who would level, with themselves, the great
 And sacred things, with them unconsecrate!

Shall such pollute our holy cause, who feel
 For truth and truth alone a fervent zeal?—
 Shame to myself, if e'er with such you find 195
 One thought, one hope, in common o'er my mind!
 I scorn, my friend, for single faults to search,
 Or cast the shade of slander on our Church.
 If Founders wish their kinsmen first should claim
 The bounty they bestow—what cause for blame? 200
 If College Fellows their associates take,
 As some for learning, some for pleasure's sake;
 Men of convivial wit and manly sense,
 Gay without fame, and wise without pretence;
 Men, who the world's more polish'd tone have seiz'd, 205
 Careful to please, and easy to be pleas'd;

Who on such choice his weak attacks shall ground;
Nor envy seats, where'er such men are found?

C. Well then; if such your thoughts, your speech
amend;
Be slow to blame, and fearful to offend! 219

P. What should I fear, who feel with honest joy
No base ignoble hopes my versé alloy;
Who know, that in my soul no malice works,
Deep in my veins no latent poison lurks?—
Yet is there one, a fond, a deep regret— 216
The thought, that idle satire pays the debt,
Here due to those the friends, the guides of youth;
That personal feelings clash with love of truth.
Oh! to those softer feelings might I yield,
Still would my lips remain in silence seal'd. 220
Nay more: had Oxford's errors, here confin'd,
Escap'd the prying notice of mankind,
Then had I mourn'd in secret; nor my song
Been first to do her honour seeming wrong.
But, OXFORD, where there are, whose hate, or pride 225
Pours truth and falsehood in a mingled tide,

To sink thy rules in undistinguish'd blame;
 Rob all thy worth, and sully all thy fame;
 Is he thy foe, who, while he dares to own
 The faults too deeply felt, too fully known, 230
 Would purge alone the grosser dross away,
 That the pure ore might burst refin'd to day?

C. *Even wert thou such, this self-applauding strain
 Leave for awhile, and make your object plain.*

P. 'Tis this: in plans of study lies to see 235
 What errors are, what remedies might be;
 Nor friend, nor foe, to rules, which now prevail,
 But as they rise, or sink, in reason's scale.
 For who would loosely talk, or idly dream,
 When Education is his sacred theme? 240

C. Stop then: its want, its moral use how great;
 Its vital consequence to Church and State;
 All this we take for granted: you, my friend, 245
 Need not discuss its methods, aim, or end.
 In Senate, College, Drawing-room, Town-hall, 248
 Poor Education is the theme of all;

The theme, which veteran Politicians treat,
 To the green Statesman, who just takes his seat.
 Young lords, old ladies, system-makers grown,
 Have all some scheme and whimsey of their own; 250
 Can quote Reviews and deep opinions tell
 Of Pestalozzi, Fellenberg, and Bell.

P. Yes: but I fear, while reigns a very itch
 To train the poor, that we neglect the rich;
 Or while fresh systems daily take their growth, 255
 Each thinks his own the best alike for both.
 Yet as to diff'rent aims the schemes must tend,
 Ought not the means to vary with the end?

But your alarm is groundless: gen'ral rules
 For modern institutions, infant schools, 260
 We leave to thousands, whom such plans concern,
 And to our own, our fitter object, turn—
 What object ask you?—to discuss with truth
 The ripe instruction of ingenuous youth;
 To trace how School and College form the mind 265
 To fill the higher stations of mankind;

Most, how we spend the last best years enjoy'd
In bookish ease, or well or ill employed;
Ere ardent youth forsake this sacred seat,
Their education deem'd at least complete; 270
All grown to manhood, though scarce one in ten
Fit to converse, and act, and live with men.

C. This may be true, and yet our rules be best,
For thus I put the matter to the test;
And prove our studies most deserve respect, 275
Consider'd in themselves, or in th^r effect.

Look round on all, where man is most refin'd,
Where most expanded beams the human mind.
Yet low and lost degenerate Padua lies,
And Spain with all her Universities: 280
Yet France still gives, untaught by troubles past,
To learning's self a military cast;
And Polytechnic schools, we own are good,
To form young heroes to their trade of blood!
There, too, where Germans boast all learning known,
All science master'd, and all arts their own, 286

See study form a mind wild, dark, unfix'd ;
Study, with blood, and broils, and madness mix'd ;
Where, while self-murder sentiment supplies,
Enthusiasts, as they stab, philosophize. 290
And though some fondly rove for means to live,
Or ease and comforts Europe cannot give ;
For science none will cross th' Atlantic wave,
Where learning only goes to meet a grave.
In short, my friend, how far soe'er we roam, 295
The first, best learning flourishes at home.

Let foreign youth proclaim their livelier parts,
And skim the surface of a thousand arts ;
Still seek their mad philosophy, adore
The flimsy patch-work of their modern lore ; 300
And strain from ancient wisdom, deep and clear,
Diluted maxims for a lady's ear ;
Still laugh at those, as beings strangely odd,
Who superstitiously allow a God ;
Of modern tongues a mingled jargon speak ;— 305
No pedants they to dull their brains with Greek !
Gather some grains of golden dust, that gleam
From ancient sources down some modern stream.

But be it yours, in nobler habits bred,
 To dig the mine, and seek the fountain-head; 310
 Yours undismay'd to search the ancient store,
 For solid radiance of the sterling ore!
 Though science, clogg'd with Metaphysics dark,
 There takes nor life, nor morals, for her mark;
 Then, like Acestor's arrow, honour'd most, 315
 When wrapt in clouds, in fiery wanderings lost;
 Still, Isis, sound thy classic banks along,
 Hallow'd by time, the strains of classic song;
 Still stricter science give a manlier tone
 To English minds, and vigour all their own! 320

P. If, as you say, and I would fain be sure—
 Strict are our morals, and our thoughts more pure;
 Nor dark ferocity and gloomy pride,
 Nor morbid feeling draws the soul aside;
 Nor blind infuriate zealots dare to claim 325
 Poor patriot virtue's long perverted name;
 Yet must I deem our government alone,
 Gives to the English mind its stamp and tone;
 Freedom of thought and action there employs
 The range of finer feelings—not destroys— 330

The Constitution leaves all talent scope,
 And each in all pursuits success may hope.
 Oxford this open gen'ral scheme neglects,
 And education thus creates defects:
 Since seem the studies, which have reign'd so long, 335
 More incomplete, than radically wrong;
 But could you prove, that Physics hurt the mind;
 That plans are ever best, as most confin'd:
 That Logic makes our mental vigour such—
 None, but a foe, would then our rules re-touch. 340
 My wish is true improvement; not a change,
 Where faults long-lov'd but yield to faults more strange;
 Exotic follies grow, as ours have grown;
 And alien errors dispossess our own.

C. Round, then, our native shores thy thoughts convey
 Where none from Isis bears the palm away. 346
 Sad Erin! though in thee the Muses smile,
 Thy sons for science seek the sister-isle.
 And studious Scotland makes her honours cheap;—
 For none will value much, what all can reap. 350
 To lyric Granta turn; and see the tide
 Of wit and Cam so bright and lively glide.

Yet thoughts of envy many a bosom fill—
 Envy or emulation, which you will—
 While the first place in one pursuit they claim, 355
 Which oft contracts the mind, destroys the frame.
 There too are some, who aid the friends of schism;
 And Mathematics lead to Methodism.
 With long dank hair, and eyes upturn'd, they teach
 That saintlier faith with lowliness of speech : 360
 That saintlier faith, in turn, bewilders more
 Her votaries, mad with theorems before;
 Throws o'er their minds one dark desponding mood—
 —How could it less in common gratitude?

P. Where Bacon, Newton, Milton, Dryden, Gray, 365
 Fed the high thought, or nurs'd the early lay;
 Assign due rank to Granta's equal name;
 Be generous in your rivalry for fame:
 As once proud Sparta gave to Athens peace,
 And scorn'd to quench the other eye of Greece. 370
 Nor hope, my friend, on foreign faults to rise
 With zeal, alike invidious and unwise,
 For, if comparisons our faith engage,
 Who lives, that might not seem profoundly sage?

Thus each were learned in the last degree, 375
 Who found one other more a fool than he:
 Thus plainest nymphs might boast their lovely form;
 And Naples cold be prov'd, and Moscow warm:
 Thus foreign scholars might perfection claim,
 Because they find in Britain much to blame. 380
 Hope rather, then, our discipline to see
 From its own faults more positively free.
 Since common imperfections Oxford shares,
 Dismiss your own, and leave the rest to theirs!

C. What, then, these mighty faults you make, or find,
 So loosely nam'd, so wantonly assign'd? 386
 At random still you talk, as soldiers fight,
 Who know not, heed not, if their cause be right.

P. Say first, why Oxford views with careless eye,
 Improvement, as some danger, pass her by; 390
 Nor follows plans, which suit our state and clime,
 The growth of nations, and the march of time.

All things have time and tide: time governs all,
 And bids, or states, or studies, rise or fall:

With age our pleasures vary, human joys 395
 Time often changes, ere he quite destroys;
 And science too grows old, as, less confin'd,
 With time progressive mounts the human mind:
 For years by nature innovate and change,
 And fools alone from custom never range. 400
 Such dare not e'en deformity displace;
 The last to start, they shall not win the race:
 Such love the standing pool, keep furl'd the sail;
 While others court the stream and catch the gale!

Oh! it were sweet—as poets erst have sung 405
 In lasting verse that lives on ev'ry tongue;
 Most sweet, to gain that high and tranquil scene,
 Fair Science! where thy temple stands serene;
 Thence calm, and pure, and passionless, to throw
 Our pitying glance upon mankind below; 410
 Wand'ring, uncertain, through life's devious way;
 Restless, tho' toil but leads them more astray;
 Seeking, with vain contentions ever split,
 The prize of honour, or the praise of wit;
 Of wealth, distinction, pow'r, the cumb'rous share; 415
 And splendour's gilt pre-eminence of care.

Yes: it were sweet, and oft will present beam
That pure delight to fancy's fondest dream.
Thus once, methought, that temple seem'd to rise
In sober glory on my raptur'd eyes; 420
So high, that all distinctions from that height
Seem flat, and fade to nothing on the sight;
So calm, that earthly passions, earthly fear,
Seem distant storms, that die upon the ear.
There, on the summit of that mount sublime, 425
It stands, as it has stood from earliest time;
The noblest object of our best careers
Through the long lapse of Earth's six thousand years!
But few at first could reach it; or advance
To view the temple with a steady glance: 430
While to the summit ran no beaten track,
Soon the most active fell desponding back.
None sought it then with truth's assisting ray;
None pierc'd, few sought to pierce, the thorny way,
Where gloomy wood and tangled thickets run, 435
For ever dark, impervious to the sun;
Though through one op'ning mid th' incumbent night,
Burst the resistless force of heav'n and light!

Most too, with fancy gay, and youthful pride,
 Pluck'd the fair flow'rs which grew on either side; 440
 Nor thought of more; but there preferr'd to stop;
 Since mountains all were barren at the top,
 And others found their gaerdon with a sigh,
 Was but the fame of having climb'd so high!
 At last, when each some farther progress made 445
 Than those before, a beaten road was laid.
 Chaldee and Egypt plann'd the path, which Greece
 Pursued with toil, unknowing how to cease;
 And thus their greater zeal, or happier fate,
 Pass'd the long-mist'd; but ever-open, gate. 450
 There like superior beings seem to sit
 The men, endued with more than mortal wit;
 Thy seven sages, Greece, due honour bear;
 There godlike Socrates, and Plato there:
 There mid the rest, with equal glories grac'd, 455
 The mighty Stagyrte sublime was plac'd!
 Yet that first path was winding, long, uneven;
 With doubt on earth, and ignorance of heav'n;
 Perplex'd, and intricate, and lost at last,
 When Gothic darkness o'er the world was cast. 460

And thus, when brighter days began to roll,
And men rubb'd off their cankering rust of soul;
That road, regain'd, from long and dark neglect
More windings cross, more briars intersect:
Yet was it honour'd, which in times of need 468
Had custom and antiquity to plead:
But modern labour learnt at length to climb
A gentler path, unknown to former time:
Not that their wisdom more than happier chance,
And brighter ages, made their steps advance. 470
As previous labours shew'd a certain way,
So former errors taught where not to stray.
Mid these our guest the sacred temple won,
Whom smiling Science hail'd at once her son.
Him too with joy those elder travellers greet; 475
For Envy dwells not, Science, in thy seat.
But still some bigots their old way pursue,
And deem it heresy to try the new:
Though laugh the rest, far onward as they press
With lighter labour, and with more success: 480
And e'en those sages from their bright abode
Scorn their own followers on that longer road;

Which some for want of native spirit take,
Some for the very intricacy's sake!

In dreams then musing, who such men could be, 485
I woke in Oxford. C. Here then canst thou see
Such toil-enamour'd wanderers? how? explain
The darkness of your allegoric strain.

P. Like other streams, the stream of knowledge grows
Deeper and wider, as it farther flows: 490
For tributary tides, however small,
With added waters swell th' amount of all.
Shall then the wise, with modern streams supplied,
Leave these to seek afar a scantier tide?

C. Yet oft obscur'd and sometimes lost the course; 495
Wider at last, but clearer at the source.

P. What! lives there one, my friend, but must allow
Science, as more extended, purer now!
Yet grant their diff'rent praise to either growth—
Since both have profit, let us grasp them both; 500

But not alone the old,—for ancient lore,
In plainer words, seems perfect now no more,—
May well our wonder, praise, delight, produce;
But modern science serves to modern use!

The breathing Gods by Grecian sculpture fram'd, 505
Though worn by time, and not a little maim'd,
Are still by modern Art most dearly priz'd,
Copied, rever'd—nay, almost idoliz'd—
Yet taste and feeling pour their just complaints,
When Heathen Gods are turn'd to Christian Saints; 510
When adoration Jove, transform'd, commands,
And Venus in Italian Churches stands.
Thus ancient learning boasts peculiar grace,
But it must keep its proper time and place.

Hence, then, have sprung our errors: all our plan 515
In times of Monkish ignorance began:
And shall we keep defects, which long ago
Or made men ignorant, or kept them so;
When not a mind beam'd forth, whose rising ray
Could clear the clouds of prejudice away; 520

Or Genius felt a torpid slumber, curst
 With Gothic fetters, which it dar'd not burst;
 And ceaseless labour pil'd, in reason's spite,
 Long comments darker than the Stagyrte?
 Past are those times: but they are past in vain, 525
 If systems, then engender'd, still remain;
 If any shadows of the former night
 Cloud the full blaze of universal light.
 Now—for the cloister the foundations laid,
 But for the world the superstructure made— 530
 'Tis plain, till greater change our rules befall,
 They seem but modern Gothic after all!

Ye, then, who late repair'd that awful place,
 Which pillars of all Architecture grace—
 If right we deem th' exterior of our Schools 535
 A fitting emblem of their motley rules—
 Add but the Gothic there; and let us be
 Consistent thus in inconsistency!

C. Dream not of change, a last resource at best,
 Since changing parts, endangers all the rest; 540

As from some tow'r, or grey time-honour'd wall,
 Take but one stone away, you loosen all.
 Besides, my friend, our system, bad or good,
 Has still the lapse of centuries withstood;
 And plans retain'd and rev'renc'd now so long 545
 Will not, young man, be alter'd for a song!

P. Logic profound! it clears at once my sight:
 Yes, yes! antiquity of wrong makes right!

Yet was one mummy lately known to fall,
 A fit forerunner of the fate of all: 550
 Or stands e'en now on dank Oblivion's brink,
 And waits one final thrust to bid it sink.
 Go then, go first of fellows, long our jest;
 Prepare a place in Lethe for the rest!

And just to prove our studies for the Schools, 555
 Not so interwoven with more sacred rules;
 So closely interwiv'd, that ev'ry change
 Must all our scheme and discipline change;
 In either University we find,
 One College free from rules, the rest which bind. 560

C. Such would you praise? P. No: freely though

I say.

That were there one, who burnt for wisdom's ray;
 One, who should well employ his native pow'rs,
 Unwarp'd, unfetter'd, by such rules as ours;
 He, active, bold, a wider course might steer, 565
 Might gain more knowledge in a single year,
 Than they, who claim the honours of degree,
 With all their boasted learning, reap in three:
 Though one could there that double wreath attain,
 Which youth—whate'er its worth—will strive to gain;
 Those empty honours which, alas! must bloom, 571
 In all their freshness, only on a tomb:
 As erst in Rome round Petrarch's brow was cast,
 At once his proudest laurel and his last!
 Though others there, by kindred genius led, 575
 May bind that wreath around a happier head:
 Though there be those with mighty stores endued,
 Though shining, solid, though diffuse, not crude;
 Yet is there danger, that such learned ease
 O'er youthful minds has too much pow'r to please; 580
 Without excitement broods the love of rest
 In dead'ning influence o'er the stagnant breast:

Increasing sloth must want of impulse breed,
 And talents, ere they ripen, run to seed.
 For thus the rambling mind can scarce be brought 585
 To closer study, and intenser thought.
 Fearful of toil, its varied light pursuit
 Culls only flow'rs, and fondly deems them fruit;
 Loves on the barren surface still to dwell;
 Would seize the kernel, yet not break the shell. 590

Rather must just employment fill the mind,
 Various, not loose; exact, but not confin'd;
 In these important years of nurture's plan,
 Which, last and best, or make, or mar the man.

See through our shades, in life's fresh vigour strong,
 The crowds advance with easy pace along! 596
 Theirs the light limb, the heart that knows not care,
 The gay self-pleas'd vivacity of air;
 The laughing eye, the unencumber'd breast,
 The confidence of hope not yet repress; 600
 The spirit buoyant, energetic, free;
 Th' imagin'd grasp of what may never be;—

Bright age! by not one doubt, one terror cross'd;
 These all are thine—and shall all these be lost?

Yes: they must die: the joys, the dreams of youth,
 Fade at the stern, th' erasing, touch of truth. 606
 Ye images of bliss, how vain your strife,
 With the dark tints, the real ills of life!
 Such visions, more than earthly, frail as fair,
 Like the thin bubbles, which we blow in air, 610
 Though bright, and beautiful, must soon decay,
 And from their very fineness melt away.
 Nor inspiration breathes her fervour o'er
 The soul all-chill'd, and thoughts that glow no more.
 Yet in the well-stor'd mind has often shone 615
 A steadier brightness forth, when these are gone:
 Though all must perish, if, from first neglect,
 No useful studies strengthen, aid, direct.

Now is our pride of age, to which belong
 At once the fancy warm, the reason strong: 620
 Now, on a desert plac'd, the mind unquell'd
 Would still work on, by nature's force impell'd.

Yet oft on trivial nothings will misplace
Vigour, which well the highest aims might grace.
Trifles possess the soul; and here, e'en here, 625
Might Plato view full many a charioteer,
That force and talent early waste and late,
To guide a steed, which might direct a state!
For youth would ever of itself excel;
And thus needs more to be directed well. 630

Thus, too—as fancy, left to nature's force,
Pursues uncheck'd a wild and varying course—
Here must we sigh, and much lament to find
The misdirected ardour of the mind;
And more, since when from learning's seat we part—
As now we pant with eagerness to start— 635
To where the world first opens on our sight
Chaos of pleasure, tumult, care, delight;—
For let us own some joys on earth remain,
And life still blends some pleasure with its pain— 640
That world with all its objects, scarcely brooks
That will, attention, time, be left for books.
Man must be studied: we must learn to scan
The feelings, passions, lights, and shades of man.

If poor, unknown, we seek a rank, a name, 645
 Profession, action, all our thoughts must claim.
 Luckless ! if learning, like the fabled fruit,
 Oft charm us off from needful, dull, pursuit.
 If Fortune show's her gifts, on luxury's lap,
 Excess, the leech of life, our strength shall sap ; 650
 Pleasure shall soften, pow'r corrupt the heart,
 And beauty's more intoxicating art.
 Thus rather must we hope to bring our store
 To worthy profit, than to search for more ;
 Rather to good the heap acquir'd to turn, 655
 More fit to use our learning than to learn.

Here, then, must all be gain'd, that should be known ;
 Or here, at least, the seeds of science sown :
 Yet 'tis not that profoundly taught we hope
 Med'cine, or law, or each profession's scope ; 660
 But rather youth's best energies—not tied
 To single points,—expanded far and wide.
 Not, in their brightest stage, condemn'd to pore
 O'er certain studies, scann'd enough before.

When female forms are exquisitely fair, 665
 We gaze on something more than beauty there,
 Not single features, single charms, admire;
 The shape, the bloom, the eye of languid fire;
 But grace diffus'd o'er all; and then confess
 Th' harmonious might of blended loveliness. 670
 Thus o'er the soul, in perfect nurture bred,
 One liberal tone and polish should be spread:
 Those arts of general use to all mankind,
 That mend the heart, and dignify the mind;
 Arts which, possess'd, might well adorn the gown, 675
 Alike the learning of the school and town.

And why must they be different? Who can see,
 Or where they part, or how they disagree?
 But now that learning, which the schools possess
 Men of the world despise and value less; 680
 Because of knowledge, which they seek the most,
 These learned schools have scarce a glimpse to boast.
 Where'er, my friend, with ancient lore they find
 New science, history, arts, and laws, combin'd;
 They too in turn that ancient lore will prize; 685
 And all-accomplish'd minds again may rise.

Thus, what, when join'd, receiving, giving, aid,
 Might one harmonious unity be made;
 Blindly they hate, and mutually reject,
 And make a discord from their own neglect. 690

Yet when I own there are, whose mightier grasp
 The range of science through all time can clasp;
 Minds of that mightier force, that polish'd tone,
 Which make all arts and languages their own.
 Whose pow'r of words the store of thoughts may speak—
 I know, my friend, I have not far to seek. 696
 What then?—such men were ne'er of systems born;—
 Because they go beyond them, they adorn.—
 Systems, at least, like ours, which keep confin'd,
 Again I say, the growth and stretch of mind. 700

C. Nor life, nor human faculties allow
 Learning's whole range to grace a single brow.

P. The more, then, nothing useless let us learn,
 But what is fitting, what is best, discern;
 For now we find in history, science, arts, 705
 A mingled mass of unconnected parts:

No manly, great, and comprehensive whole;
 To form, or shew, high energies of soul;
 The best pursuits discourag'd, robb'd of fame,
 Though taught in semblance, and rever'd in name. 710
 While o'er them rise a tribe of worthless things,
 Like low-born despots on the throne of kings.
 Science itself we wish matur'd, enlarg'd,
 Not some few points with small details o'ercharg'd;
 While all, that makes the Graduate highly class'd, 715
 Is mere mechanic drudgery at last!

C. Stop: my blood boils with anger, as I hear.

P. Say rather, truth's too probing touch you fear;
 But wait: examples best the difference shew
 Between what might be known, and what we know. 720

Suppose—for such may be, some youth of worth,
 High lineage, and a mind ennobling birth.
 Suppose th' expectant honours of the State
 His rising years and earliest efforts wait:
 Or else he hopes, perchance, with patriot zeal 725
 In foreign courts to guard his country's weal.

E'en now, methinks, his ardent thoughts rejoice,
That list'ning crowds shall hang upon his voice.
E'en now he fancies Britain's grateful praise,
When his first toil, skill, knowledge, tact displays. 730
He ought, then, to be eloquent.—We trace
For this some gen'ral heads of common-place:
The glowing words, sound sense, arrangement clear,
That kindled Rome and Athens, breathe not here:
The orators renown'd in elder days. 735
Warm not our hearts—and eloquence decays.
He must be skill'd in history, and in arts—
But these are left, and history read in parts.
How is he scorn'd, whose master-hand pourtray'd
With moral pencil in just light, and shade, 740
Few gleams of virtue, 'mid guilt's deep'ning gloom,
In the dark picture of degen'rate Rome!
The laws of safest use, and best intent,
The forms, and theories of government,
The rise and fall of dynasties; the springs, 745
Which move the fate of kingdoms and of kings,
These are not learnt; nor view'd by history's light,
Nor trac'd in self-existent rules of right.

The mind gains little; all its useful board
Our intervals of idleness afford. 750

Or to the shade our man of letters goes,
Retir'd, ambitious only of repose.
Far from the madd'ning crowd's intrigues and strife,
Sweet contemplation! courts thy tranquil life.
Enough the means, which bounteous fate has lent, 755
Pleas'd with his choice, with careless ease content;
Yet say, from classic banks, and wisdom's seat,
What studies bears he to his lov'd retreat;
When o'er him steals some melancholy mood,
To fill his mind, and charm his solitude? 760
Alas! he bears not hence a single rule
Of useful study, not commenc'd at school.
No real knowledge has his mind been taught
To fill the vacuum of suspended thought.
Like some disdainful stranger's, seems his mien, 765
Who deems no wonders worthy to be seen.
Unnotic'd, and unlov'd, beneath his eye
The min'ral, vegetable kingdoms lie;
His breast, not harmoniz'd to nature's tone,
Unpierc'd: her secrets, and her laws unknown; 770

In all, but in the taking a Degree,
The rustics round him are more wise than he.

Yet stor'd with pleasures, which true knowledge gives,
How blest, retir'd, the man of letters lives !
Unlike the hero of our modern strains, 775
Fire at his heart, and fever in his veins ;
There calm, content with study, ease, and health ;
Reckless of honour, not a slave to wealth ;
He heaves no sigh for all ambition gains—
—Ye grov'ling great, how seldom worth your pains ! 780
Not that he feels no more th' endearing ties
Of country, friends, and kindred, round him rise ;
Or hears unmov'd whate'er achiev'd, or plann'd,
Involves in weal or woe his native land :
But that, his heart on higher objects cast, 785
He "loves the world but as the world" at last.
And though no systems human ills assuage ;
No studies stop the dark advance of age ;
No rules may give the mind that temper'd strain,
On which misfortune spends her shafts in vain ; 790
Yet they may prove a harmless sure resource
'Gainst small vexations of more constant force ;

Those busy troops, which ever cloud our air,
 The flying light artillery of care!
 E'en thus how well the world resign'd might be, 795
 To live, divine Philosophy, with thee!

But now, no useless, though ungrateful task—
 Our system's errors must we more unmask.

C. Still, as the eye sees not itself, the mind
 Sees others' faults, but to its own is blind; 800
 Yet stop! for these are mere Utopian schemes,
 Chimeras all, and visionary dreams.

P. Yet, though too far on fancy's pinion borne,
 Fain would these schemes my native land adorn.

Now peace, with art, wealth, commerce as her train,
 O'er the worn land returning smiles again; 806
 And soon, as patriots fondly hope, shall heal
 The wounds, the woes, which all began to feel.
 Now England, full of glory, has begun
 Nobly to use repose so nobly won; 810

And, arbitress of Europe, issues forth
To view the wonders of remotest North ;
Her sails for science not in war unfurl'd ;
At peace within herself and with the world.
Now youth unlearns victorious arms to wield, 815
And seeks pure laurels on a bloodless field ;
While these twin seats of learning scarcely hold
The flowing tide from war to study roll'd.
Thus some third seat will fancy's wand produce,
Though last in time ; not last, perchance, in use. 820
Methinks, I see the glorious structure stand,
Worthy the polish'd age, the prosperous land !
There Education's large and liberal plan
Shall form from docile youth th' accomplish'd man ;
There what may modern Europe most concern 825
The embryo statesman shall not fail to learn ;
There Britain's annals reap their just applause,
Our country's heroes, and our country's laws ;
There might the Stagyrīte be much, not all :
There Monkish Mumm'ries, Forms, and Logic fall ; 830
Bright models, more than Rhetoric's vain pretence,
Shall teach a strict and manly eloquence :

Ethics shall flourish such as Moderns know,
 Not as they beam'd two thousand years ago.
 There ev'ry Science better days shall see, 835
 And Mathematics in their just degree;
 All follow'd with reward; no few possess
 Of all our honours to exclude the rest;
 No studies then shall keep in one dull round
 Aspiring youth, by clogging fetters bound; 840
 But, Nature, thy Philosophy shall reign
 Prais'd and unenvied in its wide domain;
 And History, read no more in parts, shall bind
 The whole extended chain of human kind;
 Teaching—that what Man is be rightly seen— 845
 What from the world's foundation Man has been.

C. Enough, enough! with dark desires possess,
 Too wild for treason, and too dull for jest,
 I see your fate: these visions of romance,
 Which now with shapeless hopes your soul entrance; 850
 These shall through life inspire your idle lays,
 For friends to pity, and for fools to praise.

P. Yet could I think our custom-fetter'd schools
 Would dare to innovate, and change their rules;
 Then should I wish that Oxford stood alone 855
 The seat, still lov'd and honour'd as my own.
 But all is useless—words of warning here
 Fall dead and pow'rless on the drowzy ear;
 Though should the general voice demand, that youth
 Be rul'd no more by custom, but by truth; 860
 Though should the nation raise a louder strain,
 And England call—it will not call in vain.

C. Why change the studies?—*P.* Have they not been
 chang'd,
 Though not enough?—and is our Church derang'd?—
 Not that my wish would banish hence the page 865
 Of old historian, statesman, bard, or sage:
 Though much has perish'd; much of use or grace
 Our modern views can now no longer trace.
 E'en as the streams, which ever clear and strong,
 Flow by the magic of Mæonian song. 870
 —That song, which may the proud idea give
 That human art can Nature's self outlive.—

Xanthus, or Simois, whose long-honour'd tide
 Now scorns for weak degen'rate slaves to glide;
 From Nature's face are vanish'd; scarcely seen 875
 The tracks, which tell where once the streams have been.
 Rather, since great our loss, th' ingenuous breast
 Will value more, like Sibyl-books the rest :
 And deem, that here in classic learning's seat,
 At least should classic learning be complete. 880

Ye best and earliest lessons, that inspire
 Fancy's bright dream, and honour's noble fire :
 O'er which the kindling mind entranc'd has hung,
 While life, and life's fresh feelings yet were young;
 Relics of ancient days, that still impart 885
 The brightest models for succeeding art !
 'Tis you have form'd our op'ning pow'rs, and taught
 The bliss, the pride, of ev'ry dawn of thought.
 You, 'midst the chill of added years, excite
 The fresh emotions of our first delight. 890
 Who must not own his taste by you refin'd ?
 Your magic charm upon th' enraptur'd mind

Most softly, yet most intimately, steal,
Who has not felt, possess of soul to feel?
Who may not thank you, that your spells have pow'r 895
To shed kind influence o'er his dreariest hour,
And bid his aching heart awhile forget
Its bitter sources of intense regret?
Foil'd in his hope to give a Senate laws,
Sick of the breath of popular applause, 900
With you would Fox his earlier love renew,
And cast ambition's self aside for you.
E'en as I speak, with you will memory raise
A thousand thoughts—the thoughts of happier days—
The dreams almost of infancy, the joys, 905
Griefs, pleasures, pains, and sports, and feasts of boys;
The crowding recollections, hopes, and fears;
The friendships—nay, the loves—of riper years:
All on your pages live, and seem a part
Of you, so closely mingled in my heart! 910
You as I leave, and see before me rise
The world in all its dark realities;
I feel like some sad wanderer forc'd to roam
Far from the scenes of youth, the friends of home;

Those friends for ever fond, for ever true— 915
To whom it wrings the heart to bid adieu.—

I go :—henceforth must all your charms be tried
In stol'n embraces, like a Spartan bride :
And now I pour, if not condemn'd unheard,
To all, as thus to you, a parting word. 920

But you, in precedent's vile chains confin'd,
Perversely dull, and obstinately blind ;
Who find no errors, no defects ; or say
That sacred errors should not know decay ;
Who innovation's dang'rous guilt proclaim, 925
With empty quackery of some specious name.
Who think, that change of study, soon or late,
Shall bring in jeopardy both Church and State ;—
Though scarce would trouble e'en such dire mishap,
Your high and mighty drowzinesses' nap : 930
To you I speak not : puff your senseless pride
With sacred words profan'd or misapplied :
No pow'rful strain your fatal bonds can break—
Or bid the sons of Lethargy awake !

Yet blindest those we call, who will not see; 935
The worst of slaves, who wish not to be free!

Yet they, who see no faults, our pity crave :
Who sees with patience is as much a slave;
As blind, with reason beaming on his view,
Foe to the truth, and to himself untrue. 940

You then, who much our system's scope and bent
In silent sorrow inwardly lament :
Whose better taste, and comprehensive soul,
Part would destroy, to render firm the whole ;
Unlike the champions, which our faults possess, 945
Greater in number—in decision less—
Rise from your torpor : to yourselves be just—
The strength of error springs from your distrust :
And they—though few, determin'd—more effect
Than you, who waver and your cause neglect ! 950
When bold exertion error's tide should stem,
Your weak forbearance must yourselves condemn.
Deem ye, that faults, retain'd for custom's sake,
A wish can alter or a whisper shake ?

Infatuate! what ye might avert, ye bear: 955
 And fix yourselves the chains ye loathe to wear!
 Be bold! for boldness is discretion too;
 And caution is a fool as us'd by you—
 Shall nobler thoughts to slavish bigots bend?
 Away with prudence, which is folly's friend! 960

Sprung from your fears, increasing ev'ry hour,
 The phantom, Custom, boasts a tyrant's pow'r;
 Gains a false pomp, an unsubstantial throne—
 Unreal strength, and terrors not his own.
 With threat'ning mien, methinks, the Giant-shape, 965
 Like the dark Spirit of the stormy Cape,
 Now stops th' inquiring minds, whose ardent way
 Would scorn his ancient bounds, and crush his shadowy
 sway.

Yet might one voice uplifted break the charm;
 One burst of energy his pow'r disarm, 970
 And Truth dissolve the phantom's idle train
 Back into native nothingness again!

C. And you—for words are impotent address'd
 To one by mad desires so long possest—

You, who still dread the ordeal of our Schools, 975
Too young to influence, or to change the rules,
Be not misled :—your manly course pursue,
And honours, fortune, fame, shall smile for you !
Believe our studies, though perchance confin'd,
A strong and healthy exercise of mind ; 980
That English character, and English thought,
Breathe in these shades, and by these rules are taught.
Nay : should with time some errors here have crept,
And long the spirit of Improvement slept ;
'Tis yours no crude attempts to make or prize, 985
But calmly bear what older heads advise ;
To wait, till Reason sheds her certain ray,
And sage Experience points the better way.
For thee——*P.* For me, my friend, thy care forego !—
My warmth, impatience, rashness, all, I know ; 990
I could not wait, till brighter days should rise,
And Oxford quit her errors, and be wise.
Yet oft my thoughts shall hover round the scene,
And fondly turn to where my youth has been :
As shades, they say, their earthly labours o'er, 995
Haunt the green spots below'd in life before.

You, my associates—and this lengthen'd lay
 Proves with what pain I tear myself away—
 If e'er this simple, low, familiar strain
 Could cheat one bitter moment of its pain; 1000
 E'en on one single thought amus'd or taught,
 Could call a smile, or raise a dormant thought;
 Now while I pour, resolv'd far hence to go,
 The verse which deeper feeling bids to flow:—
 If too, this verse may light its transient flame, 1005
 Live its short space, and boast its little fame;
 If thoughts, like mine, within your breasts have dwelt;
 And I but speak what many more have felt:
 Believe this last remonstrance, ere we part,
 Sent in sad earnest from an honest heart! 1010
 Some safer prospects, now resign'd to run
 A rough advent'rous course, which most would shun;
 Some little sacrifice of time and ease;
 Some toil in writing, and some pains to please;
 These have I giv'n, and these would give again— 1015
 Might I but deem them things not giv'n in vain.

Not but your judgment in this lay may find
 Some wrong creations of a wand'ring mind.

My brain may be too busy, and too bold
Th' unsteady course, my rambling thoughts would hold.
If all be such, forget, deride, condemn !— 1021
I ask no pity for myself, nor them.—
Yet where the mind has meditated long,
Scarce can its wildest visions all be wrong.
Thus may, perchance, your calmer reason see 1025
Some thoughts that claim remembrance—e'en in me—
Your cooler sense extract some gleams of truth,
From these loose fancies of presumptuous youth.
This is my hope: with this I now depart
In sadness, not in bitterness, of heart. 1030

Oh ! not as citadels for error made,
Ye tow'rs, which rise amid th' embowering shade !
And thou, whose happy stream so gently flows,
Emblem at once of pleasure, and repose :
Isis, farewell ! my steps must leave thee now, 1035
But not as deem'd mine earlier wish and vow :
Now with thee blended, Oxford, o'er me swell
Some bitter recollections—yet farewell !
Long shall thy classic shades, thy cheerful stream,
Flourish and flow in memory's dearest dream: 1040

Still with fresh feelings be thy scenes allied
Of fondness all—and some, perchance, of pride !
And though thy boasted honours of Degree
Not long could tempt, but lost their charm for me ;
Though oft my wand'ring thoughts too far would range,
And much would dare to question, wish to change, 1046
For many a folly though my heart must grieve,
And many a wasted hour would fain retrieve ;
Though silence more had pleas'd ; and satire seem
To most, unwise, ungrateful—thou my theme— 1050
Yet lives the hope among thy sons to claim
Some short, some faint remembrance for my name ;
As one not all unworthy—but whose song
Was right in motive, if in judgment wrong :
As one, who burnt thy weight, thy worth to raise ; 1055
Whose soul was sadden'd when he could not praise ;
Whose busy thoughts would 'gainst himself rebel ;
Who scorn'd to flatter, but who lov'd thee well :
Who loves thee most, as now his steps forsake—
For tighter binds the chain about to break ! 1060

NOTES.

H

NOTES.

1.

A little after great Mercurius fell.

Page 5, line 2.

A little ere the mighty Julius fell.

HAMLET.

THE fall of statues has been for ages connected with the fall of systems and states. It is no wonder, therefore, that the disaster, which happened to the leaden deity of Christ Church, was considered at once calamitous in itself, and ominous of farther calamity. It proved, alas! that unhallowed efforts may destroy in a moment things long consecrated by time, place, and habitual veneration: and it suggested the melancholy idea, that, since the patron of learning was not secure from mutilation, the learning itself would not much longer be regarded.

2.

'Tis this: in plans of study here to see

What errors are, what remedies might be.

Page 16, lines 235 and 236.

Whatever may have been said before on other subjects, I would now confine myself entirely to the ques-

tion, whether our present method of study ought on all accounts to be retained, or is capable of rational improvement, without danger to the discipline and character of the University. It is my desire to recommend a change and enlargement of our system by arguments, which, however weak, are at least dispassionate, and equally removed from exhibiting animosity, or giving offence; and it is my hope, that a wish for free inquiry will be considered as altogether different from a presumptuous dislike of regulations, merely because they have been long established, or an idle love of innovation and confusion.

3.

Each thinks his own the best alike for both.

Page 17, line 256.

Without venturing to enter upon a question, which has been so often, and so fully discussed, as that of education in general, I would merely, with all due deference to persons of longer experience, suggest a few remarks on the changes lately established in England. The system of Bell and Lancaster, which is so admirably calculated, and so widely beneficial in the instruction of the lower classes, has been now introduced into some of our great public schools. Here, however, it may be doubted, whether it is either so useful, or so appropriate. The chief advantage of the system consists in this—that it teaches a great number of boys with very few masters, and

consequently at little comparative expense. But in our public schools, these are not objects worthy of much consideration; and in some we may now find more masters than employment for them. Boys will, after all, be more willing to learn from masters, for whose age and character they have necessarily some respect, than from their own play-mates and associates. The plan, too, gives little or no scope to more than ordinary individual talent; and engenders, perhaps, some degree of deceit and subterfuge, rather than an open and liberal spirit. These are objections which I have often heard; but I yet repeat them with much humility, and even something of distrust. Of this, however, I am sure—that no excellence in the manner of instruction can render our education complete, till there is some enlargement of the matter; and till that confined system is abolished, which now unfortunately seems likely to be perpetuated, from the action and re-action of our Schools and Colleges upon each other.

4.

And Spain with all her Universities.

Page 18, line 280.

“Nor would it be unuseful,” says Pinkerton, “to know the system of education practised in Spain, as the reverse must be excellent.” The authors, it is farther observed, most in repute through her upwards

of twenty Universities, are Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas.

5.

*Thus foreign scholars might perfection claim,
Because they find in Britain much to blame.*

Page 23, lines 379 and 380.

I am far from proposing any foreign University as a model for imitation; as, whatever may be our faults and excesses, they are undoubtedly inferior in the great points of discipline, moral principle, and general respectability: we may, nevertheless, learn something from the objections which foreigners universally make to the English system. The principal one is this, that our attention is confined to a few particular studies; and those not the most necessary for the common purposes of life. It is urged, however, in answer, that each University ought to have its own peculiar branches of learning, in order that young men may have an opportunity of going to the one, whose studies are most congenial to their habits and inclinations. Persons of this way of thinking approve, of course, the Aristotelian system of Oxford, and the strong bias to mathematics at Cambridge: and this, indeed, might be very well, if our time for education was long enough to allow us to go from one University to another, and enjoy the advantages of each of them in succession. But, taking the

world and human life as they are, it is certainly more practicable, as well as more desirable, that one and the same University should contain in itself, and follow up to a certain extent, every branch of useful and liberal education. Whether this is the case in Oxford will be afterwards considered.

6.

*With time progressive mounts the human mind :
For years by nature innovate and change,
And fools alone from custom never range.*

Page 24, lines 398, 399, and 400.

These lines are merely a versification of a passage in Bacon's "Essay on Innovation," where it is sufficiently demonstrated, that in many cases no change can create more confusion, than a continuance in old, and elsewhere exploded, institutions. Universities, it will be readily allowed, ought not to compromise their dignity, or endanger their reputation, by hastily adopting new and untried theories: but when the utility of any innovation has been proved by experiment, as little ought they to withhold their countenance and encouragement, or to remain behind the common advancement of science. Of every change we may say in the words of Garrick's Epigram, that

"When confirm'd by general approbation,
"It is not heresy, but reformation."

7.

Oh! it were sweet—as poets erst have sung.

Page 24, line 403.

Sed nil dulcius est, &c. &c.

See LUCRET. B. 2.

8.

*Hence, then, have sprung our errors: all our plan
In times of Monkish ignorance began.*

Page 29, lines 515 and 516.

Every body knows what was the character, and what were the studies of the times in which our Universities were founded: and whoever either thinks for himself, or reads what Adam Smith, or any other author has said upon the subject, must be aware of the absurdity of maintaining any part of a system, which was originally instituted in times so much less enlightened than the present. Upon these topics, therefore, it is needless to enlarge: but there is one circumstance which may be thought worthy of observation. The period of entrance into the University was formerly much earlier in life than it is in our age: and in consequence some time remained, after taking the first degree, for studies of a more general nature. When, however, we have arrived at the age of one or two and twenty, we must enter immediately upon a profession; and from the unremitting attention which most of them require, are

obliged to pass by altogether much of that knowledge, which is disregarded at the University, but is most useful or most ornamental in life.

9.

Yet was one mummerly lately known to fall.

Page 31, line 549.

It will at once be perceived, that I allude to the Exercises of the Determining Bachelors: but there is little hope, that our follies of mere form will be all abolished, when we see it seriously required for a prize-composition, that there should be neither more nor less than 50 lines. In consequence of this edict, some of our young poets have debated within themselves whether it would be lawful for them any longer to close with their customary Alexandrine: or if they had made 48 lines, with which they were satisfied, they were obliged to add two more, however weak, and however little to the purpose. Their poem, like Falstaff's regiment, must be complete in number some how or other: with regard to the quality of the lines, as of the recruits—that was altogether a second consideration. This is a noble way of teaching fine writing: and at this rate, we may soon get back to Acrostics; and to the good old times, when verses were written in a particular shape. The thing, indeed, is altogether so ridiculous, that I should not have mentioned it, but for this reason—that it is a fit emblem

and example of the general tenor of the whole system: where there is always some particular portion marked out; and although you must not do less, you gain no advantage by doing more.

10.

*Yet 'tis not that profoundly taught we hope
Med'cine, or law, or each profession's scope.*

Page 36, lines 659 and 660.

What, let me again ask, is the true end of all liberal education?—For this is the point which, “like a great sea-mark,” must be kept always in view. It is allowedly this: to form not a lawyer, or a physician, or a person skilled in any single profession; but a man, as Cicero and Quintilian require in the orator, “*omnibus disciplinis et artibus instructus*.” The practice, therefore, of our Universities, where the same studies are requisite for all the members, seems preferable in this respect to that of those Universities abroad, where a different degree is taken according to the different professions, which are afterwards to be embraced. For there are many things, which it equally concerns every one to know; nor is it possible to excel in any particular profession without a competent degree of general knowledge. No man deserves the name of an accomplished scholar, who is not stored with the elements at least of every science, with generous sentiments, and

with sound principles: and it is, perhaps, the greatest mark of a well-educated mind, to be able to make all the arts and sciences, as they are intimately connected, bear upon, and illustrate each other; and apply a fund of miscellaneous reading to the present subject, which engages the attention.—If this be owned—and I do not see how it can be denied—I would ask, how it is to be done, without the study of modern as well as ancient learning; and an acquaintance with those sciences, which the wisdom, or the fortune of later times has either perfected, improved, or brought to light? .

11.

No manly, great, and comprehensive whole, &c.

Page 39, line 707.

It is altogether impossible—to pursue the subject of the former note—that a fine or comprehensive intellect should ever be formed without viewing not history only, or any other science, but all science in general as a whole; without observing the beautiful connection and mutual dependence of all the arts, and knowing the assistance which each can afford in the investigation of any other. I would ask, then, the defenders of the present system, which of these two things they mean to affirm—that the modern sciences are here sufficiently learnt, or that they are not worth learning. If they choose the latter part of the alternative, their state of

mind is so hopeless, that they can only be left in the quiet enjoyment of their ignorance: but if they choose the former, they will say, probably, that there are lectures on all these subjects; and, perhaps, seriously demand, what more can be required. We may answer at once, that these lectures should be attended: for it comes to the same thing in reality, whether there are no lectures, or no audience: and, indeed, the institution of any new lectures in the existing state of things would be a mere farce, and a needless expense. The fact is indubitable, and may be easily demonstrated, that the place of many of the professors is almost a sinecure, and Adam Smith complained some years ago, that at Oxford they had left off even the pretence of giving lectures. What then is the reason of it?—Are the professors incompetent? Certainly not.—Are the younger members of the University indisposed to such studies, because they are totally useless, or peculiarly irksome? This cannot honestly be asserted. The fault lies deeper, and in the system itself. These studies are not absolutely forbidden; but, while so great and unequal a weight is placed in the opposite scale, it matters little whether they are absolutely forbidden or not. Let every thing be put on an equal footing, and every thing will soon find its proper level. Either let particular honours be instituted for the particular sciences; or let there be one general honour, which rises gradually

higher, in proportion to the number of sciences and studies, which are brought up, and the accuracy and extent to which they have been acquired.

12.

*While all, that makes the Graduate highly class'd,
Is mere mechanic drudgery at last.*

Page 39, lines 715 and 716.

It is not my intention to dissuade any person from seeking our honours as instituted at present: they have at least this advantage, that the attainment of them gives the idea of application and steadiness of character, which it is of much value to carry with us into the world: but at the same time, I am perfectly convinced, that they require no superior abilities to be attained; that they are of very little utility in themselves; and that the time might be much better employed. For merely consider, how the last year of the Undergraduate is spent; the year perhaps of most importance during his whole life, as far as literary attainments are concerned? In getting up his Logic; not in gaining an acquaintance with the great principles of general philosophy, but some few treatises of Aristotle; not in acquiring a competent knowledge of universal history, but the minutiae of some particular historians; which, when he comes to be examined, inspire in every stranger, who hears the examination, either disgust, or laughter: and at last he takes into the Schools, not the books which he liked to read,

for the purpose of gaining the honour which he deserves, whatever it may be; but a particular number and set of books for a particular class; a plan, which makes his success, if he succeeds, less than it might otherwise have been; and his failure, if he fails, doubly conspicuous, and doubly painful. After all, too, we may remember the old proverb: ..

Nisi utile est, quod facias, stulta est gloria.

13.

Now peace, with art, wealth, commerce as her train, &c.

Page 43, line 805.

The present state of England is certainly an advantageous one for the advancement and improvement of education. The subject is much agitated and very popular; and the profound peace both allows time and attention to be bestowed upon it, and induces many young men, who were before destined to military employments, to attach themselves to civil and literary pursuits. To this might be added—if their progress had any influence upon Oxford—that Political Economy, and many other sciences are making continual steps towards perfection, daily better understood, and better explained.

14.

*There might the Stagyrite be much, not all;
And Monkish Mummeries, Forms, and Logic fall, &c.*

Page 44, lines 829 and 830.

Without pretending to call in question the great and comprehensive genius of Aristotle, or to deny the value and excellence of his productions, I would merely hint a few questions, as to the propriety of making them an exclusive and necessary study. It certainly appears natural, that we should choose a system of Ethics, Politics, or Rhetoric peculiarly adapted to our own age, nation, religion, and government. Have we then no writers in any of these departments of science; or what are the superior qualifications of Aristotle, which entitle him, notwithstanding these first disadvantages, to the preference? Was the ancient system of Ethics purer or more complete, than our own? Or was Political Economy better understood in the petty states of Greece, than in the kingdoms of modern Europe? Who will venture to make either of these assertions?—The treatise on Rhetoric contains undoubtedly some of the most profound and ingenious observations ever made on human nature and human passions: but these are just the parts to which the least attention is here paid, because they are at once intelligible, and felt and acknowledged to be useful. The whole plan, however, of the treatise seems but ill calculated to form an orator: and Blair has clearly proved the invention of “*loci communes*,” or “*sedes argumentorum*” altogether nugatory and inefficacious. “It is evident,” he says, “that though the study of common places might produce very showy academical

declamations, it could never produce useful discourses on real business." Who in fact can expect to make a good speech by a receipt? Locke, in his "Remarks upon the Reading and Studies of a Gentleman," mentions with due praise the second book of Aristotle's Rhetoric: but he mentions it, as it ought to be mentioned, only in conjunction with other works, which equally deserve and demand our attention.—Again, his treatise on Politics certainly contains much instruction with regard to the political institutions of the Greeks, and gives us a great insight into the legislature of the different states; but who can expect just or enlarged views of policy from a man who inclines to the opinion, that a state of slavery is in some instances necessary and natural?—To the plan, arguments, and style of Aristotle's treatises high and peculiar commendation must be allowed; but they are liable at the same time to many objections. Most of the treatises are in places incomplete, or corrupt; and some of them mere fragments; and the general plan can often therefore, be but indistinctly perceived: his arguments are often of little weight and application to the present state of science, for these reasons:—some of them have reference only to the customs and political regulations of Greece, and rely for confirmation upon the other treatises no longer extant; some are employed in refuting the doctrines and notions, which are now scarcely known, of the other philosophers; some

are mere arguments of language, and their whole force or importance is derived from the shades of distinction between particular Greek words: his style, too, is dry, cramped, obscure, and dogmatic; and his observations appear to myself, I am free to say, rather as notes, which may be afterwards expanded, than as parts of a regular and finished treatise. After all, there is neither beauty nor sublimity in obscurity of style; and in speaking of Aristotle we may once more repeat the old saying, which is not the less true, from having been so often quoted, "*Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi.*"—The deficiencies of Aristotle seem, indeed, to be familiar to our Examiners in the Schools: for, as the French writers have pretended to take from the Poetics of Aristotle many remarks, which contain principles, of which Aristotle himself had scarcely an idea; their questions, in the same manner, often go far beyond the matter contained in the treatises; and are rather elegant deductions, and fanciful amplifications of his system, than a strict examination in the system itself. This is no weak argument to prove, that we are farther advanced than Aristotle in science; nor can it to any reflecting mind be a matter of the smallest surprize. In works of imagination the first will be generally the best; and Homer, therefore, is yet unrivalled: but in productions, whose excellence depends upon reasoning and investigation, improvement must naturally advance with time; and as, on the one hand, we are

not to think less of the genius of any philosopher, because he is surpassed by the efforts of succeeding ages; so it is folly, on the other, to make an exclusive study of his productions, and read them as class books in preference to those of the philosophers, who surpass him.— Nothing need again be said of our system of Logic: its preservers are themselves aware, that it is worse than useless: and whoever is willing to examine without prejudice the system of Bacon, or read what Locke, says in his chapters on “Reason” may be easily convinced, that it is at once detrimental to the progress of knowledge, and to the powers of the human mind. Much might be added, and many authorities might be adduced on the subject; but it is better perhaps to leave every one to his own judgment and capacity; “the best way to come to truth, being to examine things, as really they are; and not to conclude they are, as we fancy of ourselves, or have been taught by others to imagine.”

15.

And Mathematics in their just degree.

Page 45, line 836.

Oxford is not considered a Mathematical University, and I have, therefore, said little of its Mathematics. The truth, perhaps, is, that they are too much studied in one University and too much neglected in the other. The study of Mathematics is of infinite use to strengthen the

memory, and form the mind to habits of close and accurate investigation: it is, besides, impossible, without some degree of proficiency in them to understand any of the phenomena of nature, and many even of the machines and inventions which are in daily use. The direction, therefore of the Platonists, that none should enter the Academy, uninitiated in the Mathematics, is absolutely necessary for all, who wish to make any progress in the more abstruse sciences. At the same time, the exclusive pursuit of any study must confine the intellect, and engender very narrow and prejudiced ideas of the other departments of knowledge. We see, therefore, many of those, who have taken the highest Mathematical honours at Cambridge, not merely unacquainted with the finer branches of art and literature, but without any sense of their beauties, or taste for their enjoyment. On leaving the University, they either keep up their Mathematics to the detriment of all other knowledge; or in acquiring that knowledge, they unlearn their Mathematics. It is surely a pity, that such exclusive and intense devotion is bestowed on any study, which is so often only acquired in the University, to be forgotten in the world.

16.

At least should classic learning be complete.

Page 47, line 880.

Oxford is considered a classical University, and therefore no excuse can be offered, if any impediment is opposed to the study of the Classics. While, however, some books are known to be liked in the Schools, and some to be disliked; it is not to be expected that a complete knowledge of them should be obtained. As long as Aristotle alone is revered, Plato and the other philosophers; Cicero, Quintilian, and other Rhetoricians, who improved upon the Aristotelian system, are of course disregarded: while particular historians only are admired, and the ancient orators are altogether in disrepute, how are we to hope for a general knowledge of history, or any eloquence whatever? Besides, as with regard to education in general, so the true end of studying the Classics is now misunderstood. They are not to be read merely, that we should be able to write Greek Iambics, or Latin Hexameters; but that we should be able to feel their beauties, and transfuse their spirit into our own language. At present, as the object of our Schools is to prepare young men to make a figure at the University, they are generally more capable of Latin, than of English composition; and, according to the existing system, School and College are of reciprocal detriment to each other. At the University, classical knowledge is seldom improved, and what we gain in its stead it is really difficult to say. It is, however, very easy, if we speak in negatives. We do not gain any

acquaintance with modern science, or modern history; with political economy, as now established; or with true philosophy: and after taking a degree we are compelled almost to re-commence our education. If it should be argued, that modern knowledge may be acquired during those months in which residence at the University is not expected, I have only to express my pity for Oxford, if it must be said at last, that the best part of the system is the length of the vacation.

17.

With empty quackery of some specious name.

Page 49, line 926.

"Words are things," it has been said, and perhaps truly: for it is certain, that in the world, or in the University; in politics, or in study, mere words can put all things in confusion. Here custom and precedent on the one hand, change and innovation on the other, are the words to represent either tranquillity and reason, or irregularity and disorder; yet these things are neither synonymous, nor necessary consequences of each other. The word custom, makes equally a learned University retain its errors, or a French postillion keep his large boots.

18.

Away with prudence, which is folly's friend!

Page 51, line 960.

I affirm, without any hesitation, or any fear of contradiction, that a great part—perhaps the greater part—of our Tutors are dissatisfied with some things at least of the present system. Why then are they not changed, or at any rate examined? Such men are responsible, by their luke-warm and foolish caution, for the continuance of our defects; and they ought to be sensible that there are times, when patience is weakness, and forbearance is pusillanimity.

19.

Like the dark spirit of the stormy Cage.

Page 51, line 966.

Vide the *Lusiad*.

20.

Whose song

Was right in motive, if in judgment wrong.

Page 55, lines 1053 and 1054.

It is my honest and fixed opinion, that some change is necessary in the course of study at Oxford. If, however, any person had undertaken the task of reformation, whose name could give weight and credit to any sentiments, which he might profess, I should have been better pleased: my own would not, and it is therefore concealed: but in my case, there is this consolation, that any converts to these opinions will be converts to reason and not to authority. There is this reason, also,

why I have stept forward, uncalled for, and perhaps unwished for: I am neither ambitious of University honours, nor fearful of any construction, nor any consequences, which may result from disregarding them. Far from me, however, be the presumption of supposing that any suggestions of mine could be of the smallest value in forming a judicious plan of practical improvement: yet I think, enough has been said to prove the utility, and the necessity of taking the matter into consideration, whether some change would, or would not be advisable. So much certainly would not have been said, if I did not respect and regard the University as in many respects the finest institution in the world, and did not feel the more anxious, on that account, that its system of studies should be free from error, deficiency, and prejudice. Nothing of course can afford complete and general satisfaction, but complete and general improvement! but there will at least be some hope of ultimate reformation, if we can only apply to Oxford the modest inscription of the Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburg, "Paulatim."

THE END.

Munday and Slatter, Printers, Oxford.

AN
APPENDIX
TO THE
OXFORD SPY.

Munday and Slatter, Printers, Oxford.

AN
APPENDIX
TO THE
OXFORD SPY.

Nothing extenuate,
"Nor set down aught in malice."

OXFORD:
FOR MUNDAY AND SLATTER, HERALD-OFFICE
1818.

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APPENDIX
TO THE
OXFORD SPY.

AMONG the most awkward and embarrassing situations in life, is that of a man who receives praise, which he is conscious of not deserving. This, however, in some small degree, has been my own case, when applause has been given to the sentiments which contain any reflection upon the discipline of this University. For it has been lately my private speculation — and it is certainly no dull or uninteresting one — to consider what are the effects of partial error upon a system in general; and whether that, which we at first consider as evil in itself, is not generally conducive to the good of the whole. The result of my inquiry has not disappointed the expectations which I had formed; it has convinced me that some apparent defects are equally useful in the natural, intellectual, and moral world; and that it is as necessary that there should be a mixture of abuse and imperfection in the institutions which men frame, as that there should be a portion of impurity in the air

which they breathe. To place this matter in the clearest light, let us take a passing survey of mankind in general; and if the course of things were changed, consider for a moment what would be the result. Foreign and domestic quarrels, disturbance, and disease, are universally supposed to be among the most melancholy incidents which occur in the tragic farce of our existence. Yet without war, what becomes of our soldiers? How discontented are they at present, and how well the nation follows their example!—If there were no diseases, our physicians would be undone:—if the litigious spirit of the people was extinguished, our lawyers must wear their insignia for nothing, without fees, without dignity, and without employment. If there were no political dissensions, what stop is there to the despotism of men in power, or what theme for the patriot speeches of men in opposition? And lastly, if there had never been any disputes about religion, we should not have been blest with the mighty labours of the Fathers of our Church. In the same way, the errors and deficiencies of this famous University, have alone given room for the ingenuity and ability which have been employed in their defence; and brought to light that admirable firmness which has displayed itself for two hundred years in a magnanimous defiance of argument and derision, and a glorious contempt of the opinion of

the world. I, therefore, hasten to offer these remarks, which otherwise would not have been written, as a full recantation of some mistaken notions contained in the Dialogues ; and as the best method of declaring that I am now a most loyal and orthodox son of the mighty mother, ready at all times, and in all places, to assert the superiority of Logic over Natural Philosophy and the system of Aristotle over the system of Bacon. For the sake, however, of the younger members of the University, I am willing to expose my own weakness, by laying before them the monstrous and heterodox sentiments which I formerly entertained, that they may be convinced into what abominable heresies the mind must necessarily fall, when it indulges the pernicious habit of thinking for itself. We are obliged, indeed, occasionally to hear such assertions as the following :—" Philosophy, wisdom, and liberty, support each other ; he who will not reason is a bigot ; he, who cannot, is a fool ; he, who dares not, is a slave ;" but we immediately discover them to be dangerous and delirious ; and mark the writer as a man, whom the ancients would have invited to drink hellebore at Anticyra, and our own countrymen would send with more humanity to live in Bedlam on " bread and bastinadoes." It must then be carefully remembered, that the opinions which will be here expressed, are those upon which I now look back with shame

and compunction, and are merely brought forward, like the drunken Helot, as an exhibition and a warning to youth and inexperience.

It may be requisite to premise, that in any remarks upon the discipline of Oxford I mean not the slightest idea of comparison, having but little acquaintance with the institutions of other places, and but little reverence for the system of Cambridge. Viewing education in a political light—the light, undoubtedly, in which it ought to be viewed—the studies of the rival University can hardly be considered as preferable to our own: the mind is as little fitted for the business of life by Greek Odes, and Greek Iambica; and the investigation of mathematical truths, until it is incapable of reasoning upon human probabilities; as by logical disquisitions, and disgusting minutiae of detail in the perusal of the ancient authors. In defence of these latter points, it is commonly urged, that the chief purport of education is, to inure the mind to habits of accuracy in reading, and precision of thought: yet, allowing this to be true as far as it goes, it is difficult to conceive how the end can be attained, until the mind is furnished with a large stock of ideas, to arrange, dispose, and afterwards produce at the proper moment; and it can scarcely be denied, that there are many exercises which will at

the same time teach it to think, and store it with materials for thinking. If a man were asked which was the most perfect mode of education, he might say at once, that which settles the principles, while it improves the intellect ; which forms the best men, and the most useful members of society, and renders them most competent to perform their part on the great scene, in which they will soon be engaged. The institutions of our own, or any other University, are means, not ends ; they are a preparation, but not a completion ; their studies, honours, and advantages, are worth nothing, but as they serve towards advancement in life, and are an earnest of greater exertions, and higher fame, when the race is run on a more ample space, and with a greater number of competitors. I speak, of course, merely of such as go into the world in any civil capacity ; and not of those who are received to the bosom of the church, or remain as tutors in the University.

Keeping, therefore, this view of the subject, it is my intention to offer a few remarks upon our system abstractedly, and unconnectedly, without any regular detail, and leaving out of the question as much as possible whatever has been said before upon it, either on the one side, or on the other. Let me, however, first observe, that if we allow the system to be good, we must certainly allow it to be well administered. The tutors in most of the colleges

are men of great abilities and attention to their office ; and the Collections at the end of each Term are sometimes not altogether a name. But the dispute rests upon measures, and not men ; and all the care which is employed to maintain a discipline radically bad, can do nothing, but extend the magnitude of the misfortune, and perpetuate its duration.

Immediately on his arrival at Oxford, the Undergraduate, if he is engaged at all, is engaged in preparing for the first public Examination ; the object of which Examination is stated to be, to try his acquaintance with the construction and idiom of the Greek and Latin languages. This design is certainly useful, and the more praiseworthy, as the stoutest champion for the system of this place will hardly affirm that it is, on the whole, conducive to improvement in accurate and critical scholarship. For my own part, I am perfectly convinced, that in any competition, which depends upon these points, the candidate will have a better chance of success, if he is but just come from a public school, than if he is already of three years' standing in the University. Nor can any rational objection be made to the introduction of Euclid into the Responsions, although we may sincerely regret that Logic, that "ruling passion" of the place, so frequently intrudes itself even in this early stage of the Academical career. But it is, of course, often brought up in the first Examination,

because it is a *sine qua non* for the second; and fastens itself upon the Gownsmen through the whole period of his residence; like the guard, which a man has to attend him through a dangerous country, but of which he is very glad to get rid for ever, as soon as he arrives at the frontiers of another. Although without the smallest expectation, that these desultory observations will have any effect, where reason and ridicule, satire and sense, the contempt of every wise man out of Oxford, and the disapprobation of two-thirds of the literati within it, have exhausted their efforts to no purpose; I yet enter my protest against Logic, as both a negative, and a positive evil of the most serious importance. It is a negative evil, as it consumes, in idle and tiresome disquisitions, the time which might be much better employed in useful acquisitions, or rational recreations: it is a positive one, as it fatigues and confuses the mind, without improving or strengthening it, until it is lost in the labyrinth of mood and figure; attends more to the form of a sentence, than to the meaning which it contains, and is impeded by some unwieldy mode of proof, instead of going straight forward according to the plain dictates of common sense. The defence, which is usually urged is, that Logic is a practical method of detecting fallacies in argument: but this, I suspect, in the first place, to be a mere

sophism, or indeed, as arrant a piece of quackery as the plan of teaching history by a pack of cards, or the artificial memory of a German Professor : and, in the second, it can undoubtedly only be of use when it is perfectly understood. But few Undergraduates, or even Graduates of the University, can perfectly understand it ; and the unhappy Logician suffers all the mischief and inconvenience of a man, who has arms put into his hands, of which he is not well acquainted with the use : he will soon find that he cannot bring his syllogisms to bear upon the affairs of the world ; that the intrigues and uncertainties of life supply him with but little necessary matter for the exercise of his ingenuity ; and that he must either come to no conclusion at all, or arrive at it by the more simple process of judgment and induction. There is one remark, connected with this subject, which seems to me worthy the most serious attention, and on which I can hardly write with temper and moderation. It is well known, that more men fail in both Examinations on the point of Logic than on any other, or, perhaps, than on all the rest, when taken together. Thus it happens, that, frequently, not only are the feelings of an individual wounded, his hopes thwarted, his prospects injured, his confidence in himself destroyed, and a corroding recollection fixed in his heart for life, but deep uneasiness caused in his

whole family on account of a branch of study which is difficult of attainment, and worse than useless when it has been attained. This is not declamation, but fact: it has happened often, and will happen as often again; and at this present time, we see it every day before our eyes: surely, too, it is but mockery of consolation to say, that it passes "*sub silentio*;" when it may be confidently asserted, that there is no kind of pain or anxiety, which a man would not gladly exchange at the moment for the bitterness of that feeling, and which he would not afterwards remember with less mortification. Soon, however, the Examiners may perhaps be made sensible, that this greatest exertion of their power will, if too often repeated, be treated with derision; and nothing will be considered as disgrace, which is suffered in such a cause.

If we proceed to the second Examination, we meet immediately with Logic; no longer a matter of choice, but of necessity. Divinity very properly is the same; and if the higher honours are desired, two or more Treatises of Aristotle. Here again is shewn the wonderful talent of the legislators of Oxford in choosing the most intricate and perplexing course of study, when, after all, in the present stage of science, the reward is not proportionate to the labour. They, undoubtedly, display great

depth of thought, and acuteness of reasoning, for the time in which they were written ; but if, since that period, mines of knowledge have been opened far richer, and by no means so dark ; if Locke, Bacon, Paley, and Blair, have furnished materials for thinking on the same subjects with more facility and at least equal advantage, common policy and common sense tell us at once, which is to be rejected, and which are to be retained. Aristotle is suspected of having burned some of the works of his predecessors to make his own discoveries appear the greater ; but if he was really as warm an admirer of truth as he pretended to be, and could now see the modern improvements in moral and natural philosophy, he might himself rejoice at the progress of science, and exult, on the Spartan principle, in losing the post of honour. In his own age he kept the lamp of learning in its full lustre : let him now pass it on, and view it in the hands of others, burning with undiminished steadiness and augmented brilliancy. But upon this subject it is needless to enlarge : the system of Aristotle can be hardly in less repute than it now is among the greater part of the learned world ; and it is maintained here on that account with the greater pertinacity and resolution. Let me only remark, that it is not the wisest plan to weary the mind with investigations, superfluously difficult and disagreeable ; and to

exact an unnecessary degree of minuteness and accuracy in the knowledge of them : many young men who bring with them to Oxford a strong ardour for distinguishing themselves, and ambition for literary fame, leave it with disgust and indignation, or sink from activity to idleness, from idleness to dissipation, and from dissipation to its general consequences, debt and disquietude.—Yet if we turn to the other branches of the Examination, we shall find this attention to useless minutiae pervading the whole circle, and destroying that wide and manly spirit of inquiry which is the first requisite in all liberal education.

Leaving for the present every other consideration, it may be confidently asserted, that there is a most tedious sameness and confinement in the very course of our classical studies. I am ready to follow the rule of Cicero, and in treating of any set of men, take for examples the best which can be found : yet, when we have done so, we see them invariably bringing up the same books, and following in every point the same plan of reading ;—for this simple reason that all others are discouraged. Plato, Aristophanes, Demosthenes, Longinus, Tacitus, and Cicero himself, with many other authors of almost equal excellence, are now scarcely mentioned in our schools : a man, who gains the highest honours, must have a perfect acquaintance with all the im-

portant and decent fables of Herodotus and Livy, yet may have, at the same time, so little insight into the general tenor of Grecian and Roman history, as to think the one concluded with the Peloponnesian war, or the battle of Mantinea; and the other of no consequence whatever after the defeat of the Samnites. The whole periods, which contain the reigns of Philip, Alexander, and his successors;—and from the first Emperors of Rome to the taking of Constantinople—certainly not the most uninformative and uninteresting ones in the annals of nations—are altogether neglected, or unknown: the Examiner, with the usual cant, that it is better to learn little well, than much inaccurately, seldom takes a wide view of the subjects; but confines his questions to the details of some trivial point, which the more sensible Undergraduate perhaps scarcely deemed worthy of his time and attention. The consequences, generally speaking, are his failure and disappointment; while the Examiner may say in his defence, that this method is absolutely necessary, where the same authors are always introduced; and in a public *vivâ voce* Examination. To this, however, we have only to retort, why, then, are the same authors always to be introduced? Why must the examination be public; and why must it be *vivâ voce*? Industry, we must allow, is a quality which in every system of education must

meet with reward ; but, perhaps, the highest honours should be allotted to the combination of industry with genius ; and some composition be given, by which the trial may be made. Here it is not so ; and the man who takes his degree with the greatest credit, may very possibly have no general knowledge of the chain of history, little critical scholarship, no acquaintance whatever with true science ; but in their stead, a minute and puerile accuracy in some few points and treatises, which, as soon as he leaves the University, he will be sure to forget, or glad to throw aside ; or when he thinks of making use of these wonderful attainments in the world, he will find himself in the situation of a man who wishes to teach his native tongue abroad, without being able to speak or to understand the language of the country to which he is going.

With regard to our course of Mathematics, I own, I admire its principle, although some of our best mathematicians blame, perhaps justly, the method in which the Examination is conducted. The study of them is not requisite for a degree ; but honour and celebrity attend success in their pursuit. This is as it should be : there must, of course, in all places of education be some *sine quâ non* or other ; and the framers of our system have not, certainly, been most happy

in their choice ; yet the study of Mathematics should more than any other be left to our option ; as they are necessary for but few stations in life, and can only be followed with satisfaction when they are undertaken with partiality. I am free, also, to confess, that our alphabetical arrangement of the names of those who take honours, appears to me a more prudent plan than any other ; to confer quite sufficient distinction, and excite quite sufficient emulation. If academical celebrity were the ultimate end of the studies or compositions which are there encouraged ; other systems may undoubtedly attain the object more completely : but if we carry our views farther, we must perceive, that such unremitting attention as is then necessary to a single aim, is detrimental to general knowledge and advancement ; and the most successful candidate may at last find that the petty portion of literary fame is a poor recompense for the failure of his sight, and the injury of his constitution.

We have hitherto considered what we have in the University ; if we now proceed to what we have not, we shall, perhaps, find the strange contradiction of there being at the same time and place superfluity and deficiency. This deficiency is most apparent on the points of modern history, natural philosophy, and modern improve-

ments in general. It is an insult to our common sense to tell us, that there are public lectures on all these subjects; since few have time or inclination to attend them; and none can either incur disgrace from the omission, or gain credit from the attainment. Yet it is needless to descant upon these topics, as their importance has been so often, and so ably demonstrated: the present system has stood its ground, not from the weakness or timidity of its assailants, but the persevering obstinacy of those who defend it. I would merely suggest a question, which has frequently occurred to my own mind; why may not these studies be put on the same footing with Mathematics; and a third class of honours instituted, which it is at the option of the Undergraduate to take or decline, in proportion as he is content with ignorance, or desirous of distinction?

If any member of the University wishes to acquire celebrity, by other means besides the Examinations in the Schools, he will, of course, write for the prizes which are annually given. The Essays are very probably of use to form a Latin or English style with purity and elegance: they may display great depth of thought and beauty of expression; but Essays, except on some very popular subject, will not be read with eagerness, and for this reason there is

seldom any strong competition for the honour of victory. Of our compositions in verse I have heard it said, that they are the best methods ever yet devised to repress originality, and curb genius. The Latin, it has been remarked, if it be worth any thing, must derive its value from what it borrows from the poets of the Augustan age, and the best poem is nothing more than the best plagiarism. Virgil, if he could now appear among us, might certainly be indignant at seeing his favourite flowers transplanted and misplaced; stunted for want of room, yet withering from the contagion of the weeds, which grow in monstrous luxuriance around them. But these sentiments are far from correct; since native genius may be shewn to no inconsiderable degree even in a dead language: nor is all the censure, perhaps, merited which is poured upon the folly of confining fancy to fifty lines on a sculptural or architectural subject; and allotting the prize not to the most poetic diction or imagery, but the most accurate description of what Winkelman, and many others, must describe much more accurately, and in a style much better suited to the subject. For it may be answered that the youthful Pegasus stands in more need of the rein than the spur; and that the faults against which there is most use in providing, are flighty luxuriance, and the want of pruning and condensing, for that in writing, more than all

other things, we find the truth of the old proverb, that "the half is more than the whole." Yet, after all, we cannot observe the quantity of poetic beauty which may be put into the small space of fifty lines; without wishing that it could have appeared with greater splendour in a larger space; and sincerely regretting that the author of the Belvidere Apollo had not an opportunity of displaying his genius upon such a subject as Palestine. The excuse is, that patience would be exhausted, and time would be wanting for any longer recitation in the Theatre. If this be really the case, I would hint, with all due respect for their learning and abilities, that the Public Orator and the Professor of Poetry might in some measure shorten their speeches; since this seems a preferable expedient to depriving the Bachelors of the greater part of their reward, by not permitting them to read their Essays at Commemoration, but merely mentioning the name of the successful candidate, which measure is now said to be in agitation. After all, perhaps, composition in youth is very little to be encouraged: men ought assuredly to read much before they pretend to write; and gain an intimate acquaintance with both animate and inanimate nature, instead of intruding their crudities upon the attention of the world. He who begins to write early, will not at any time of his life be likely to write well: his imagination will be ex-

hausted before his judgment is matured: Here we are at least safe from the melancholy madness of making Odes; a species of composition which should be attempted latest, as it requires the largest share of both judgment and genius. They may, however, be made without either of these qualities by as sure a method as any other piece of mechanism whatever: some few turns and exclamations, which descend from generation to generation, as common property, mixed up with liberal quotations from the classic authors, are sufficient, and more than sufficient, to form a very pretty lyricist. Yet it is rather a mistake to imagine that every thing which is not prose, must of necessity, and for that reason, be poetry.

Let it not be supposed, that by any thing which is here advanced, it is the wish of the writer to depreciate an acquaintance with classical literature, or to praise the moderns indiscriminately in opposition to the ancients. Far from it: I can perceive the peculiar excellence of the latter as much as the most enthusiastic of their champions; and a flowery eulogium upon their beauties would be neither original nor difficult. Their admirers do them the greatest injury, in desiring that they should monopolize attention and destroy freedom of thought: a cause is better forwarded, by reforming what is wrong, than by extolling what every one must acknowledge

to be right.—I am even far from thinking meanly of the labours of verbal criticism : any person who is at all conversant with the literature of the ancients must be aware, that this criticism, to be successfully performed, requires not merely industry, learning, and accuracy of research, but also no small portion of natural talent, memory, and taste ; quickness of discernment and soundness of judgment. The critic must not only understand the sense of the author, whom he undertakes to illustrate : but be able to catch his beauties, and distinguish every peculiarity of his style. To put this matter in the clearest light, we need only compare the English editions of the present day, to those, which were printed abroad after the revival of learning, and indeed at much later periods. In the one case, we have neatness, conciseness, and utility ; and in short, real knowledge imparted— as it always should be imparted—with clearness, and elegance ; but without parade or ostentation : in the other, ponderous volumes, filled with disputes on points not worth disputing ; which are either plain at first sight to the common sense of the reader, or must after all be off necessity left undecided.—Yet if we merely seek for an exercise of thought, we shall hardly find any that will last us longer than the mighty labours of these indefatigable annotators. Their utility, indeed, has

never been sufficiently esteemed ; and they well deserve their place in the hall of the Ptolemies, or among the magnanimous heroes of Burney ; for the object they have in view is among the most important of all human considerations : truth and reason are necessary for our subsistence : the old hemisphere would have remained as happy and as enlightened without the discovery of a new one, but not without the improvements of science and criticism. What indeed are the discoverers of worlds, when compared to the discoverers of truth ? What are the restorers of liberty to the restorers of sense ? What are Harmodius, or Timoleon, Gustavus, or Tell, to Aldus, and Scaliger, Casaubon, and Bentley ? It can never be sufficiently lamented, that these sentiments have not universally, and in all ages, been entertained ; since in that case Addison might have been the Schutz of England ; Columbus might have been the first to descry a new reading ; and Newton, instead of wasting his conjectures upon the heavenly bodies, might have given us a new edition of Euclid, or Archimedes. Even the contentions and failures of the annotators afford subjects for the most interesting reflections : and nothing can display more forcibly the uncertainty of human pride and greatness, than the sight of some learned critic, who, while he is singing his pæan over a vanquished predecessor, is himself

driven from the field by a younger rival ; as the Corinthians were attacked and defeated at the very moment in which they were erecting a trophy.

But to return in sober earnestness to this University. The most unintelligible jargon of verbal criticism is at least as useful as the hypothetical syllogisms of our Divinity Schools, or the farcical exhibition of our Determining Bachelors. But these subjects I will not press : for the sake of the University, I will spare the detail of its absurdities : I will even suppose that there may be reasons to continue, what there is a necessity to condemn : though of this we may be assured, that trifling points, such as these, afford the greatest scope of ridicule to the superficial observer ; and that by retaining them in the system, we betray as great a want of policy as of resolution. It may be said, that they are mere forms ; but why are not forms to be abolished, when they become notoriously absurd, and, in fact, a real inconvenience, as they require attendance from perhaps some distant part of the country ? The worst is, that upon such topics it is impossible to be serious : they set gravity at defiance ; and however they may excite concern of mind, they certainly mock composure of muscle. If, however, any person is anxious to defend them, I shall have at least this disadvantage on my side, that I may incur the

greatest disgrace from a defeat, but cannot possibly obtain any honour by a victory.

There are many other points in our system, which must experience censure as often as they inour notice: but sufficient has been said for our present purpose. These are merely unconnected hints, to excite a spirit of inquiry in the members of the several colleges: they are written as plainly, as temperately, and as dispassionately, as I could make them; with no view of applause to my own effusions, but with the hope of some slight service to the University, and to myself as connected with it: they are thrown together so hastily, that many inaccuracies of thought and expression may undoubtedly be found, although it would be very difficult to disprove the general scope and tenor of what has been advanced. There are many among us, who can sit down with contentment and self-complacency in ignorance and in error; who persuade themselves that in all human as well as divine institutions "whatever is, is right;" that what is good at one time, must be of course good at another; and that, as our fathers framed the system at first with consideration and wisdom, so no revolution of ages can destroy its perfection, or diminish its excellence, but must make it, on the contrary, at once admirable for its beauty, and vene-

rable for its antiquity. Surely, however, it is wiser to form our own judgment in our own century: if the authority of great names be against us, to pause indeed before we decide our opinion, but not to be biassed, when it is decided: to consider, as has been often observed, "the antiquity as the infancy of the world;" and that every period must naturally and reasonably make some addition to the knowledge of the preceding, without, however, at all detracting from the comparative merit of the philosophers and legislators of the elder time; inasmuch as the latter have the power to set out from the very point at which the former had stopped. No man must pretend to reason, who has not accustomed himself to view all things in the abstract; without the smallest deference to antiquity or novelty; without prejudice and without partiality: and I hope I may at least claim more real interest in the state and discipline of the University, than such champions as I have mentioned. Nor is my presumption in these observations so great as might be imagined: many persons far wiser, and with far more weight than myself, take the same view of the question; but from the responsibility of their stations, they are not at liberty to declare their sentiments. Those who might be strong enough to subvert the pillars of our discipline, are fearful that the

ruins of the structure would fall upon themselves.— Is it, however, natural that we should acquiesce in a system, which, according to the universal opinion, is defective in some parts, and nugatory in others? Or is it wonderful that we should be discontented, when we see the University, of which we are members, become a standing joke to the world, and considered a synonymous term with error, ignorance, prejudice, and obstinacy? We are not yet of an age to bear all this with the philosophical indifference of our seniors; but, on the other hand, we are no longer children, and it is time that we should have, “what even slaves are free to,” liberty of thought. Our men in authority may at length rise from their torpor; they may display all the suspicion which accompanies the consciousness of a bad cause; all the severity which is the offspring of fear; and all the resolution which is the consequence of despair: but they will not deter us from exercising our own understandings on points which concern our own welfare, and have a reference not only to ourselves, but to every generation which may succeed us in this place. Our selfish, and our disinterested feelings, shall be all equally awakened,

Nothing is here mentioned which is not universally known, and almost as universally regretted: we may

be told, indeed, that to hunt after perfection is as useless a pursuit as that of the madman who amused himself by catching sunbeams on a wall ; and that any measures we could propose, would only have a similar effect to such as in the attempt to cure supposed insanity, have driven the patient into absolute delirium. Yet we have men fully capable of making improvement and reformation ; and even from other institutions suggestions might be taken. The Romans would never have been masters of the world, if they had not had the policy to adopt the inventions of others, and if they had not made the Carthaginian galley a model for their own. And should the faults of other systems be numerous and pernicious, we may still remember, that a medicine may be extracted from the same plant which contains a poison. My humble office is accomplished ; I have pointed out some notorious errors and imperfections : but I do no wrong to the University, unless the defenders of the present system are prepared to say, that "*summum jus est summa injuria.*"

The sum of the whole, and the plain statement of the case is this : the education of youth is always a noble and important task, and here, perhaps, more noble and important than in any other part of the habitable globe. For if we consider the weight and

dignity of Oxford itself, and the respectability of the characters who compose the great bulk and body of its members ; if we look to the munificence with which the Colleges are endowed, or even the imposing and venerable grandeur of their appearance, we may fairly assert that this University is the first in Europe, and in the world. The sons of men, who have the highest rank, or the greatest power, influence, and interest in the country, come to reside here in that period of life when their faculties are at the height, their hopes and confidence in themselves unbounded ; and before they have yet learnt the evils of ambition, or the nothingness of fame. They come in the full persuasion, that all the studies of the place will either improve their reason, or delight their imagination. Deeply, therefore, are they disappointed, when they find bigotry in the instruction, and prejudice in the discipline ; that they must attend in all things, as in Logic, to the form rather than the matter ; and that much has been retained which should long since have been dismissed ; and much refused, which should long since have been adopted. Yet this is the truth. The philosopher, who views human affairs in their true light, and has had leisure to remark the follies of the wisest, and the meanness of the proudest, will, perhaps, smile at error and ignorance in the seat of orthodoxy and learning ; yet

there is as much matter for an Heraclitus, as a Democritus, as much scope for serious sorrow, as for poignant ridicule. It requires, however, little foresight, and certainly no spirit of prophecy, to discern that this condition of things cannot last ; " the tomb of the Capulets " is already yawning for our errors ; and if any remarks, such as have now been offered, should be read five years hence, I have the fullest trust and conviction they will have become obsolete and unintelligible ; and the points on which they turn, will be only remembered among the antiquities of Oxford. If these errors are once brought openly and completely to light, they must instantly fade and vanish, like bodies which have been long preserved under the ground, but which immediately crumble and fall to pieces when exposed to the air. It is, indeed, whispered, that some alterations are about to be made, and some parts of the present system abolished. This is " devoutly to be wished," and these points will then, it is hoped, be taken into consideration ; that our system is confined ; that we have no modern science, or natural philosophy ; that the true end of education is not kept sufficiently in view ; that the Logic and Treatises of Aristotle should be entirely discarded ; and that we should not pay reverence to authors only in proportion to their antiquity or their obscurity. A future age

will hardly believe that such errors and such prejudices could ever have had existence. As yet, however, they may capitulate on terms, and march out with the honours of war ; but if they are obstinately determined to defend their works, and bid defiance to every assault of reason and improvement, the time may soon come when they will be compelled to surrender at discretion ; and, as they had no moderation in their prosperity, they will meet with no pity in their misfortunes.

THE END.

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